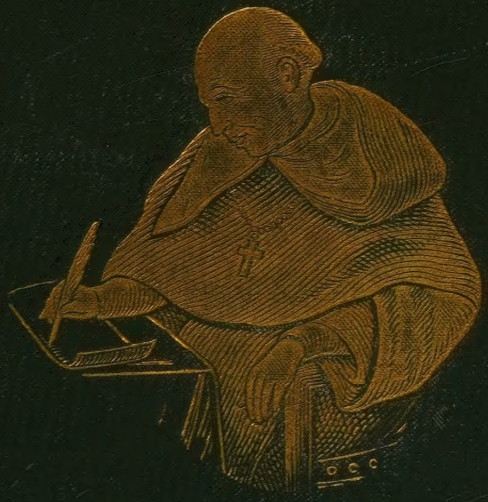
THE LIFE OF

Bartolomé de Las Casas

REV. L. A. DUTTO



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THE

Life of Bartolomé de Las Casas

AND THE

FIRST LEAVES OF

American Ecclesiastical History.

BY

REV. L. A. DUTTO.

Louis Anthony Dutto, 1850

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Life of Bartolomé de Las Casas

AND THE

First Leaves of American Ecclesiastical History.

CHAPTER I.

Ancestry and early days of Las Casas.

BARTOLOMÉ de Las Casas was born in Seville in 1474; in what month or on what day is not known. His father's name was Pedro de Casaus, a gentleman of French descent, whose family was settled in Spain for upwards of two hundred years. San Fernando, the third Spanish king of that name, during the wars, which he waged against the Moors in the thirteenth century, had received valuable aid from the Casaus; and in recompense therefor had granted them Letters Patent of Nobility. The name Casaus lost its French spelling and acquired its present Spanish form of Las Casas during the first part of the sixteenth century. I find, that, during his early

manhood, the first American Priest occasionally signed his name Bartolomé de Casaus; but, when later he acquired the official title of Protector of the Indians, *Las Casas* was the name by which his countrymen knew him, and by that name he is known to history.

The family was very prominent in Spain at the time of the discovery of America. Bartolomé tells us, in *Historia de Las Indias* (Chapter LXXXII. Book I.) that his father, Pedro de Casaus, and his father's brother, (who was titled Francisco de Peñalosa, and was a favorite of Queen Isabella) came to America with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage; Francisco in command of the military forces of the expedition, and his brother Pedro as an attaché of the Viceroy. Having served the full term of three years as Captain of the military contingent of the first American Colony, Francisco returned to Castile; but Pedro remained in Hispaniola until the 18th of October 1498, when he returned to Spain. The New World must however have had strong attractions for Pedro; for on the 23d of August 1500 we find him landing again in Hispaniola.

The nephew delights in recounting the heroic death of his uncle, remarking how-

ever, like the humble man that he was, especially in his old age: "let the glory be given to God alone." On his return from America, Queen Isabella had appointed Francisco de Peñalosa, Captain General of an army, that was sent to subdue the Moors of Cape Azamor. The camp of the Christians had scarcely been pitched on the seashore, when the enemy, in overwhelming numbers, fell upon them. Panic stricken, they would have been massacred during a rush they made for their ships in great disorder, had not Peñalosa, after describing a circle in the sand, planted himself therein, and threatened to kill the first of the twenty knights, who happened to surround him, who should abandon his post. They all fell, cut to pieces by Mohammedan scimitars, not however without stemming the onslaught of the enemy long enough to insure the safe retreat of the Christian army. Francisco de Casaus' death took place at the end of 1499 or at the beginning of 1500.

Of Bartolomé de Las Casas' ancestry on his mother's side little is known; nothing of his boyhood and scarcely anything of his early manhood. In March 1493 we find him in Seville, where he saw, probably for the first time, Christopher Columbus on his return from his voyage of discovery, and the

seven American Indians, who were the first to set foot on European soil. Las Casas was then between 18 and 19 years of age. He was yet in Castile when his father returned from Hispaniola in 1498 with a good lump of American gold, a portion of which, if I mistake not, was used in defraying his expenses as a student in the far-famed University of Salamanca. There he had an American Indian to wait on him as a page, whom Christopher Columbus had given his father as a slave. All that the Protector of the Indians himself says of his relations with this child of the forest, is found in the CLXXVI. Chapter of the I. Book of his *Historia de Las Indias*. "My father, to whom the Admiral (Christopher Columbus) had given one of them (an American Indian) and who had brought him with him on the afore-mentioned voyage (in 1498) returned to this island (Hayti) with the Commendador Bobadilla, taking with him the said Indian, who had been a few days with me in Castile, and whom I afterwards met and entertained here on this island."

If this Indian was ever truly the slave of Bartolomé de Las Casas, it must have been but for a very few days, and certainly he never was at Salamanca; for the same

vessel that brought him to Spain, brought also letters from Christopher Columbus to Queen Isabella, informing her that he had given, to each one of the returning Spaniards, an Indian. On reading which that noblest of Spanish women was greatly annoyed, and broke forth in that now historical sentence, which alone would have sufficed to immortalize her: (*"Quien dio licencia a Colon para repartir mis Vasallos con nadie?"*) "Who gave permission to Columbus to parcel out my vassals to anybody?" or as Las Casas has it: "What power has my Lord the Admiral to give my vassals to anybody?" And there and then she wrote and signed the famous decree, and caused it to be published at once in Seville and in Granada, by which, whoever had received from Columbus an Indian slave, was ordered, under pain of death, to send him back, at his own expense, to his native country by the first sailing vessel. That Indian and some three hundred others, in the company of Bartolomé de Las Casas' father and the ill-famed persecutor of Columbus, Bobadilla, saw once more his beloved Hayti at seven o'clock of Sunday morning the 23d day of August 1500.

Two years after, that is, at the beginning of the year 1500, Las Casas had already

obtained a Licentiate's degree and the title of Licenciado, by which I shall have frequent occasion to refer to him. His diploma, not only admitted him, as we would now say, to the bar, but also opened to him the doors to all judicial and administrative positions in the gift of the Spanish monarchs. It will not be thought amiss to remind the reader that a Licenciado, or lawyer, could not obtain, in those days, from a Spanish University his degree without possessing, at the same time, a fair knowledge of Canon Law and of Theology.

Chapter II.

Las Casas an American Lawyer.

NICOLAS de Ovando, a knight of the military Order of Alcantara, known as the Comendador de Lares, and later as the Comendador Mayor, was about to start for Hispaniola with thirty-two ships and 2500 emigrants, drawn mostly from the ranks of the nobility and the upper classes, to replace the infamous Bobadilla as Governor of the island, and reform abuses. Bartolomé de Las Casas was one of the emigrants. His motives for exiling himself from his beautiful Castile seem to have been then no higher than those of an ordinary fortune seeker. History however records no action of his, even while yet a layman, which would dishonor or taint the good name of a Spanish cavalier, or a Christian gentleman. He came to America, no doubt to get rich, but only if he could do so honestly. The thirty-two ships set sails from the port of San Lucar on the 13th of February 1502. Eight days later they were approaching the Canary Islands, when a severe storm fairly fright-

ened the crews and passengers into believing that they would all end their journey at the bottom of the sea. Barrels of water, of wine, of oil, etc., and all heavy articles in the cargo were thrown over board to lighten the ships, which were dashed by the fury of the wind, some on the coast of Africa and some on the neighboring islands of Tenerife, Lanzarote, La Gomera, Gran Canaria etc. Only one foundered, LaRabida, the wreckage of which and the floating cargo of the others soon found their way to the coast of Cadiz, and spread everywhere consternation and the conviction that all of the thirty-two vessels and the 2500 souls on board of them had foundered and perished. So sorrow-stricken were King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, when the news of the supposed disaster reached Granada, where they were then sojourning, that for eight days they refused to see a living soul, and shut themselves in their Palace to mourn the loss of so many of their subjects. But order had been given the ships that should they be forced to separate and succeed in weathering the storm, to report at La Gomera. In a few days thirty out of the thirty-two ships showed up. As new passengers were to be accommodated, another vessel was chartered on the Gran Canaria.

Ovando and the young Licenciado arrived in the harbor of San Domingo the 15th of April 1502. I shall borrow from Las Casas himself the description of their landing.

"The Spanish settlers of this city, which was then an unincorporated village located on the side of the river opposite the one it occupies now, gathered on the shore rejoicing at our arrival. As those on land saw and recognized those on board, some of whom had been here before, the new comers asked of the old settlers news of the country, while the latter desired to hear the latest news of old Castile, and who was coming as Governor. 'Good news,' was the answer on one side, 'the king sends to govern the Indies the Comendador de Lares of the Order of Alcantara, and old Castile is doing well.' And in response the landsmen would say: 'The Island is doing well, because much gold is being mined. One nugget was found worth, alone, many golden dollars. The Indians of a certain province have rebelled, and many will be made slaves.' I heard the words with my own ears, because I came to this island with the Comendador de Lares, and on the same voyage."

They gave it as a piece of good news and as a cause for rejoicing that the Indians had

rebelled, because it gave them an opportunity of making war against them, and thus to make slaves of them to be sent to and sold in Castile.

The reader will before long be enabled to better appreciate the full meaning of this passage of Las Casas, which is taken from the III. Chapter of the II. book of his *Historia de Las Indias.* *)

There is no indication that the Licenciado ever entered the practice of Law or held office as a layman. The usual methods of amassing wealth in the earliest American colonies were 1st *rescatar oro*, which meant bartering European trinkets with the natives for their gold; 2d mining, 3d farming. The first was followed mostly by unscrupulous and adventurous seamen who, not unfrequently, made their commercial expeditions on the islands and on the mainland for the main purpose of kidnapping Indians. The second, gold getting, principally through the enforced labor of the Indians, was the most common road to wealth. Much attention was also paid to the third, agriculture. It was the Spaniards who introduced on the Western Continent all the

*) Twelve Franciscans came on the same fleet, with Alonso de Espinal to establish the first Convent or Monastery in America.

European produces. The sugar-cane, which soon became a prolific source of wealth for Hispaniola and Cuba, was brought from Madeira as early as 1494 by Pedro de Alienzo. Bartolomé de Las Casas took to farming and mining.

In March 1494 Christopher Columbus built the fortress of San Tomas in the mountainous province then called Cibao, almost in the centre of Hispaniola. Las Casas describes the locality as follows: "He decided to build there a fortress where the Christians could dwell in safety and thence lord it over the neighboring mines. The site selected was a most picturesque one; a hill almost encircled by a beautiful and sparkling little river, the waters of which seem to be distilled, so clear are they. The sounds of its little cascades are charming to the ear. The land around is clear of brush, and the air so pure and bracing as to invite you to cheerfulness and happiness. The name of the river out of which much gold has been taken, is Xanique, and is but one of several in that province rich of the precious metal. There he caused to be constructed a house very well built of wood and burnt earth, surrounding it with a deep ditch on the side where the river did not protect it. The house, or tower, was very

strong, the Indians' means of assault considered. At the base of the hill on which the fortress is built, is a level and beautiful piece of land, called by the natives a Zabana. There, at a time when the fortress had already been abandoned, I established and owned a farm, before I entered the ecclesiastical state. The brook, at its junction with the river, forms a little island of rich and fertile soil, on which the first onions in Hispaniola were raised from seeds imported from Castile." (*Historia de Las Indias*, Book I. Chapter XCI.)

No doubt Las Casas here describes his American home before his Ordination to the Priesthood. He did not however usually reside there; for he says, speaking of the administration of Ovando: "I was here (in the city of San Domingo) most of the time of his term of office." San Tomas stood 3000 feet above sea-level, 50 or 60 miles south of Isabella (the first town built by Columbus) and about the same distance from Concepcion de La Vega, where he received Priest's Orders the first week in November 1510.

Chapter III.

Las Casas a Priest.

FORTY-TWO years after his ordination Las Casas, in a cell of the Dominican Convent in the city of Valladolid, penned the following concerning it. "During this same year (1510) and during the very days that Pedro de Cordova" (of him more anon) "was at Concepcion de La Vega, a clerigo, by the name of Bartolomé de Las Casas of Seville, one of the oldest settlers on this island, sung his First Mass, which was the only First Mass that had ever been celebrated in all these Indies (America), and for that reason was made the occasion of prolonged festivities on the part of the Admiral, (Viceroy Diego, the son of Columbus) and all those who were in the city, that is, a large proportion of the settlers on the island. It was smelting time, and great crowds came with their Indians and their gold, as they do in Spain on a great market day or fair. Gold coins had not yet been introduced, and the people caused to be coined or cast pieces of gold like counterfeit Castellanos and Ducados, and in diverse other

ornamental devises which they gave as presents to the newly ordained priest, according to each one's pleasure and means. The mouldings and the castings were made in the royal smeltery itself, as it was forbidden to smelt anywhere else, in order that one-fifth of all the gold might be set aside for the king according to law. *Reales* * had already found their way to the island, and many offerings were made of them to the new priest, who gave everything to his sponsors ‡ except a few gold pieces which he kept as souvenirs, on account of the excellence of their workmanship. A peculiar circumstance of that First Mass was that during all the festivities no toasts were offered and not a drop of wine was drunk. None was to be had on the island because no ship had arrived from Spain in many days." (*Historia de Las Indias*, Book II. Chapter LIV.)

Here begins the real biography of this remarkable man, who, being the first ordained, has not yet, as the reader shall see, at the end of this nineteenth century, an equal among the many thousands of clergymen

* A Spanish coin worth twelve and a half cents of our money.

‡ In Spain the custom prevailed of giving Godfathers or sponsors to the candidates to the priesthood.

who have since lived and died on this Western Continent. Others there have been more sainted, more eloquent, more learned perhaps ; but, if the good accomplished, for both the White and the Red man, alone be taken in consideration, the first ordained American Priest stands yet without a peer. The conviction creeps on the student of early *American History*, who dives deeply in the original sources of information that, had there been not a Las Casas, and had he not been a Catholic Priest, backed by as powerful a friend as Charles V. of Spain, it would be doubtful if even a vestige of the American Indian would now remain. But if there are now in Spanish America alone thirty million in whose veins courses aboriginal American blood, it is due to Bartolomé de Las Casas more than to any one else. The reader need not fear that this biography is to take the form of a panegyric. Las Casas was not a saint even after receiving Priest's Orders, although, were his canonization left to the scores of non-Catholic authors who wrote of him, he would perhaps be placed at the head of the Roman Martyrology. Within two years from his ordination, he became the self-appointed Protector of the Indians ; and six years after he was given that title officially.

Chapter IV.

Social, political and economical conditions of the first American Colony.

CHRISTOPHER Columbus arrived in Hispaniola, on his second voyage, the 28th of August 1493. Fifteen hundred and ninety men accompanied him who formed the first Colony. On landing at the port of Navidad he found that the thirty-nine companions of his first voyage, whom he had left behind when he returned to Spain to bring the news of his wonderful discovery, had all been massacred by the Indians. Among these first fifteen hundred and ninety European immigrants were 1st, Christopher Columbus himself, Admiral and Commander in chief of the fleet, who came as Governor and Viceroy of the Colony. 2d, His brother Diego, who, on hearing of the great discovery, had left in Genoa the loom and the shuttle, to follow his brother to America. 3d, Antonio Torres who was second in command of the fleet and first on the return voyage. 4th, Bernal Dias, who followed the expedition as Auditor of the royal accounts. 5th, Diego Marquez in charge of

the Quartermaster's department. 6th, Pedro de Villacorta as Treasurer. 7th, Francisco de Peñalosa, already mentioned above. 8th, Alonso de Vallejo, Peñalosa's Lieutenant. All these were Grandees of the Royal Household. Columbus, at his famous reception at Court in Barcelona had given exaggerated reports of the abundance of gold in the Indies. The glitter of the precious metal attracted to his standard hundreds of noblemen and cavaliers, who had grown in arms and heretofore had lived by them. The Moorish wars had come to an end with the fall of Granada, January 2d, 1492, and had left them without an occupation. The number fifteen hundred and ninety men was largely made up of ex-officers of the army, and their retainers fresh from camp-life and ready for any new and stimulating adventure, which the hated Moor, in Spain at least, afforded them no longer.

The new climate, the arduous manual labor, which Columbus was forced to impose on nobleman and plebeian alike, while building Isabella, the first American town, the want of proper shelter, the scarcity of European food, soon engendered an epidemic of fevers, and the colony was decimated again and again. To make matters worse the coveted gold did not ap-

pear in any great quantity for several years, and nearly all the surviving colonists clamored to return to Spain on every ship that sailed from Hispaniola. Many did return between the years 1493 and 1498; some on three vessels that brought Bartholomew, the other brother of Columbus to America during the middle part of the year 1494, some others, about two hundred in numbers, on the two caravels that brought back Christopher Columbus from his second voyage, and not less than three hundred towards the end of 1498.

Emigration to America between 1494 and 1500 was unpopular and, to maintain the settlement of Hispaniola, king Ferdinand and Isabella felt compelled to order, by a decree dated the 10th of April 1495, that not less than three hundred persons should remain on the island in the pay of the Crown. Another decree, dictated at the suggestion of Columbus himself, and dated the 22d of June 1497, granted pardon to all criminals then in the jails of Spain, with few exceptions, who would consent to work, under the direction and at the expense of the Admiral of the Indies, two years, if under sentence of death, and one year if convicted of a non-capital crime. All judges of the kingdom were also instructed to ship

to Hispaniola the criminals found guilty of crimes deserving exile or hard labor in the mines. But, notwithstanding all these provisions, and perhaps on account of them, there were not in Hispaniola or anywhere else in America, more than three hundred white settlers at the dawn of the sixteenth century. Of them Christopher Columbus, in a letter written at the end of the year 1500, says: "In Hispaniola there are very few, who are not vagabonds, and nobody has a wife or a family." They lived in open concubinage with Indian women, and debauched them whenever their unrestrained lust prompted them to. Of the helpless natives they recognized no right. A blot on the fair name of the discoverer of America himself is the fact, that he conceived the idea and attempted to carry it out, of filling his own and his royal master's coffers by the partial enslavement of its aboriginal inhabitants.

The famous Genoese navigator and his brothers did not prove successful rulers over the lawless and heterogeneous band of Spanish adventurers, who feared neither God nor man; and the settlement, between the year 1494 and 1500, was almost constantly in a state of revolt and semi-anarchy. Francisco Roldan, with his seventy or

eighty followers, successfully defied the authority of Columbus, and, during his absence, of his brothers Bartholomew and Diego, for not less than four years. Fearing to loose the wavering allegiance of the other colonists, the unhappy world-finder adopted the policy of condoning their thefts, their oppressions, and even their murders of the Indians.

During the two first years of the sixteenth century gold began to be gathered in paying quantities and more settlers were attracted from Spain to Hispaniola. Towards the end of 1507 it had become possible to establish a new settlement, under the leadership of Juan Ponce de Leon, on the island, which he named San Juan (St. John) and which is now known as Porto Rico from its principal harbor. In 1509 two new Colonies were established on the main-land aggregating one thousand men; one by Diego de Nicuesa in the province of Veragua north of the gulf and river Darien, the other by Alonso de Ojeda on the gulf of Urabá south of Darien, which, by mutual agreement, became the dividing line of the respective settlements of which, by royal decree, they were made governors. A few Spaniards, during the same year, also took possession of the island of Jamaica, over

which Ojeda and Nicuesa were to exercise joint jurisdiction, and use it as their common base of supplies.

Chapter V.

Relations between the First European Settlers and the Indians.

TO understand the mission and the life-work of Las Casas it is necessary to form a correct idea of the relations, existing at the time of his ordination, between the two races, the white intruder and the helpless aboriginal American. It has already been said how thirty nine of Columbus' companions, on his first voyage, had been massacred by the Indians. Why? Because they had debauched their wives and their sisters, and stolen their property. Columbus had wisely allowed their death to remain unrevenged. But by the beginning of 1494, the Spaniards, having already realized the weakness and helplessness of the natives, and built here and there on the island a few fortresses, Mosen Pedro Margarite was sent out with four hundred men to explore and subjugate it. Three Spaniards one day were on their way from the Fortress San Tomas to Isabella, accompanied by five

Indians, who had been assigned by their Cacique to carry their baggage. The eight travellers were in the water, crossing a river, when the five Americans abandoned the three Europeans and made, with the latter's baggage, for their native village. The Cacique, instead of punishing the offenders, kept the coveted European goods for himself; and Ojeda avenged the theft by causing the ears of one of the offenders to be cut off publicly, and the Cacique and his nephew to be sent in irons to Columbus at Isabella. The Admiral condemned them promptly to death, but later yielded to the entreaties of another friendly Cacique and set them free. During the imprisonment of the guilty chief a Spanish horseman chanced to pass through his village where he found five of his countrymen surrounded by hundreds of Indians, ready to put them to death. At the appearance of the man on horseback the naked Indians, as usual, took to their heels; but in the scrimmage some were wounded, others killed by the Castilian steel.

It was not long before the four hundred Spaniards in the interior of the island began to help themselves to whatever the Indians possessed; provisions to eat, women to abuse, and young men to press them into

their menial services. Meanwhile Columbus had gone on a voyage of discovery. Margarite, disgusted with the conduct of his superiors, abandoned his command, returned to Isabella and thence to Spain. His men scattered hither and thither in groups to become the scourge of the native islanders. Then followed the rebellion of Roldan, whose men outlawed by the colonial authorities, lived for four years of theft and rapine. The Indians, from believing them men from Heaven, began to look upon the new comers as their persecutors and as the personification of wickedness and cruelty. Reprisals followed, and woe to the Spaniard who chanced to be surprised alone or unprotected. Not a few of the colonists perished at the hands of the natives, who rose in arms all over the island against the intruders.

Ojeda, by a treacherous stratagem inveigled from his dominions Caonabo thebravest and most powerful Indian chief to Isabella. His treachery fired the heart of the red men, who determined to wipe out from their country the pale-faced strangers. But they were naked, and their arrows proved almost inoffensive against the shields, the lances and the fire-arms of the Spaniards. One man on horseback and in armor could

safely dash through the serried ranks of thousands of Indians and slaughter them right and left by the hundred. To pacify(?) the land, Columbus, on his return, ordered a cruel war of extermination. The rule was then adopted that for every European killed by the Indians, one hundred of these should perish. Some six hundred so called prisoners of war were captured and were ready to be shipped to Spain to be sold as slaves. The unfortunate Caonabo was already on board of one of the vessels when a tempest arose and engulfed the entire flotilla and the helpless Indian chief with it. It was then (1495) that the Spaniards used for the first time against the Indians what Las Casas calls (*Historia de las Indias* Ch. CIV. Book I.) "the diabolical invention", the blood-hounds. Twenty of these were let loose like wolves amongst a flock of lambs and thousands of the terrorized Americans were torn to pieces. The land was pacified; that is, the Indians in despair bent their necks to the yoke of the Spaniards.

Tributes of gold were then levied on every person above 14 years of age so exorbitant, that the Islanders, who possessed no appliances for mining it, found it impossible to gather it from beds of rivers in

sufficient quantities to pay them. In despair they abandoned their villages, their homes and their farms, and took to the mountains. Pursued by the horsemen and the blood-hounds they perished by the thousands of hunger and want. But meanwhile the Spaniards themselves saw their own numbers thinned out year after year, by sickness, hunger and the Indians. Dissatisfaction soon became general. The acquired habits of dissoluteness and of roaming about the island pillaging the Indians, and their consequent idleness made farming distasteful, and even impossible. Two years experience had proved that the tributes of gold, even though they caused thousands of the natives to perish, could not be collected.

It was at this juncture that Columbus, to provide for the starving European colonists, laid the foundation of what, later under Bobadilla (between 1500 and 1502), became known as the *Repartimientos*. The tributes of gold having failed, he levied new ones in the form of enforced labor in tilling sufficient fields or farms to support the garrisons and the Spanish settlers. Roldan, during his rebellion, had tasted the sweets of slavery, that is, had gotten in the habit of forcing the Indians to do for himself and for his followers any and all

kinds of labor. Coaxed into submission, but still a standing menace to the already weakened authority of the Admiral, he asked for permission to impress the subjects of Chief Behechio into the enforced labor of working the fields for the sustenance of himself and his followers. "Fearing, for good reasons, a new rebellion," Columbus yielded. "Then," to use the words of Las Casas, "those who had remained faithful to the Admiral, as well as the followers of Roldan, especially when they began to settle down and to form Pueblos (villages), each one, the herdsman, the branded criminal, and he, who for his crimes had been exiled from Castile, began to ask that this or that Cacique with his people be assigned to work his farms." The Admiral yielded again and "in a month the branded criminal and the exile became the masters of the lords or kings of the land." Columbus went farther. It is painful to translate the following letter of the Discoverer of America; "but," says Las Casas, "these are his words":

"May it please Your Majesties to allow that these people (the Indians) may be made use of, for a year or two until this business (of colonization) be placed on a good footing; it begins to do better already,

as both the seamen and nearly all the landsmen are now satisfied. Two or three ship-masters are here ready to bind themselves to take to Seville, at their own expense, slaves, for the consideration of 1500 maravedies a head, to be paid out of the proceeds of their sale. The proposition pleased everybody, and I pledged myself on account of everybody else to furnish the cargo. They (the ship-masters) will return and bring provisions and other necessary things. Thus this business (the colonization of Hispaniola) will improve. It is now in bad shape, because the people (the whites) refuse to work, and the Indians do not pay tribute."

The kings of Spain were also informed that all the Spaniards preferred already to settle down on their own account to remaining in the service and in the pay of the King. To the credit of the Genoese mariner it must be said that he never intended to permanently enslave the Indians, and that those who were to be sent to Spain were the so-called prisoners of war.

Bobadilla, his persecutor, who was his immediate successor in the governorship of the Island, to please the Spaniards, assigned to all of them Indians, and these allotments of Indians became known as *Repartimien-*

tos, which later took the more euphonious name of *Encomiendas*. Under Ovando the infamous system cast deeper roots, and, so to speak, became indigenous to the soil. In 1514 the office of Repartidor was created. His business was to *Repartir*, that is, to parcel or reparcel out the Indians amongst the Spaniards.

Thus a murderous form of slavery was established in the Antilles, which ended in their almost total depopulation in the course of a few years. It was never legalized and this was its worst feature. Except in the case of prisoners of war or of true or supposed cannibals, the Indians never became the property of the Spaniards, and could not legally be sold. They were given or taken away at the will, before the year 1514, of the Governor, and after that date, of the Repartidor. It was therefore in the interest of the white master to make the most of his Indians' labor on the farm or in the mine, while they were in his possession. If they died under the lash, of starvation or of overwork, he lost nothing, but could call for more if influential with the Governor or the Repartidor. Had they been his property it would have been his interest to look after their bodily wants in order to preserve what represented so much wealth.

Meanwhile it was believed by the rulers of Spain that their untutored American subjects were only paying a reasonable tribute or tax, in work instead of cash. Las Casas' writings, and those of his contemporaries on early American history, are full of royal decrees issued by Ferdinand and Isabella, and by Charles V. in favor and for the protection of their transatlantic subjects. Unfortunately their authority in the western World, during the first fifty years after its discovery, was scarcely more than a shadow. The will of the adventurer, the *conquistador*, exile or criminal was the only law protecting the natives.

Gold having been discovered in many places in Hispaniola, gold-hunters from Spain began to cross the Atlantic in increasing numbers. But the morals of the colony were scarcely improved thereby, although an occasional good man emigrated to America. It soon became proverbial in the Spanish Peninsula that only adventurers, outlaws and thieves passed to the Indies. These on their arrival found it but natural to adapt themselves to their new surroundings and to endeavor to get rich by oppressing the Indians.

During the first decade of the sixteenth century numerous mines were established

in Hispaniola, and in these thousands upon thousands of Indians were cast to work and to perish under the lash, or of want and exhaustion. Their brutal task-masters looked upon them as little more than beasts of burden and were merciless.

The West-Indian Islanders, unlike their brothers of the Continent, were not warlike. The nature of their country's climate made it unnecessary to wear any clothing; Palm leaves, reeds and straw afforded them what shelter was needed; the forests an abundance of fruits, the rivers and the surrounding ocean their fish, and the cazabe or cassaba plant and maiz their bread. Only the last named articles required any cultivation at all. Their lives were therefore spent in idleness, and their bodies under the influence of a tropical sun, had grown delicate, undeveloped, and unfit for manual labor. Hence the confinement and the work of the mines proved to them unbearable and fatal. They died by the thousands, and the survivors often preferred death to the galling yoke of the *bearded* intruder. "The pay," says Las Casas, "which they (the Spaniards) gave the wretches (the Indians) for their uninterrupted labor, were the lash and the stick, and scarcely a word did they address to

them if it was not to call them *Dogs*. And would to God that they'd treat them as well as their dogs. They would not kill one of these for a thousand Castellanos, whereas they think no more of killing ten or twenty Indians for a pastime or to test the sharpness of their swords, whenever their whims prompt them to, than if the poor creatures were cats. Two boys twelve years of age, were each the possesssor of a parrot. Two other individuals, who called themselves Christians, took the birds away from the children, and then, as if for amusement, cut their (the children's) heads off. Another tyrant, annoyed by a Cacique, who had failed to give all that the white man had asked for, hanged 12 of his Indians and 18 others in one and the same house. Another condemned an Indian to be shot to death with arrows because, he said, he had been slow in delivering a letter of which he was the carrier. Of similar deeds perpetrated by our Christians the number is infinite . . . . ." "They were the work, rather than of men, of devils incarnate."

Las Casas here describes the condition of the Indians under Bobadilla, during the years 1500 to 1502. The 300 brutalized criminal white men on the Island had grown accustomed to look upon the na-

tives, not as their fellowmen but as beasts, useful only for the labor they were able to perform.

Their lot did not much improve under Governor Ovando, during whose regime and that of Diego Columbus, the son of the Discoverer, a vast majority of the natives, to the number of several hundred thousands, if not a full million, perished. The inhabitants of Porto Rico and of Jamaica met with the same fate at about the same time. Those of the Bahama Islands to the number of forty thousands (*Pedro Martyr Decada VII.*) were kidnapped from their homes and brought to Hispaniola to work in the mines where they too perished and disappeared.

In Cuba the general hecatomb took place a decade of years later. A sad phenomenon took place there, which, as far as I know, has no parallel in the annals of mankind. Having been taught by experience that resistance to the Spaniards was futile and flight from them impossible, the Indians fell a prey to sullen despair and to a mania for suicide. "Whole families would hang themselves, fathers and sons, young and old, adult and children. The villagers of one Pueblo would invite those of another to hang themselves together in order to

escape their uninterrupted woes and torments. They believed that after death they would live another life somewhere else that would afford them perfect rest . . .

So great was the number of those who became affected with this mania of hanging themselves, that the Spaniards began to realize that they had overdone their work, and to grieve over their cruelties, because they saw that soon there would be nobody left to be killed in the mines . . . . A Spanish master saw the Indians of his Repartimiento, heart-broken and in despair, leave their quarters, or the mines, and on their way to their native village fully determined there to hang themselves all together. Having surmised their intention, he appeared in their midst when they were getting their ropes ready, and assuming as much earnestness as he could; "look me up a good rope," he said, "I want to hang myself along with you; why should I live without you, who make my living and mine my gold? I wish to go with you that I may not be deprived of what you do for me." They, thinking, that even after death, they could not rid themselves of him, and that, in the hereafter, he would continue to lord it over and oppress them, agreed not to kill themselves then, but to postpone their own

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execution." (*Hist. De Las Ind. Book III. Ch. L.*)

The natives of the Bahama Archipelago were naturally great swimmers. To kidnap them in shiploads and sell them into slavery was no extraordinary occupation of the early American Colonists. At first the Bahamians sold for four and five dollars a head. But the discovery of the pearl fisheries sent up their price to $100 and to $150. Those who did not die in the mines of Hispaniola, found watery graves around the little Island of Cubagua, on the pearl coast, where they were employed as divers. It is refreshing to meet with an occasional good man among the earliest American settlers. Pedro de La Isla was one of them. He was wealthy, and lived as a retired merchant in the capital city of San Domingo. It was his desire to prevent the utter extinction of the aboriginal race of Bahamians; and, with that end in view, he provisioned abundantly a caravel and sent it with eight or nine sailors to search the forty or fifty islands. They were instructed to take on board the few wretches, who might have escaped the grasp of the kidnappers. Pedro's intention was to colonize the Islanders into a pueblo where they could live in perfect liberty and peace. Three

years were spent in the undertaking; but, when the caravel put in the port of Plata, only eleven Indians were landed. So thoroughly had the sea-faring marauders done their work. Pedro de La Isla died a Franciscan Friar.

During the year 1518 smallpox was imported, from Spain, into Hispaniola; and of the Indians, who had survived the works of the mines and the tyranny of the white settlers, a few thousand only escaped its ravages. Thus in less than half a century from the advent of the white man, the inhabitants of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hispaniola, Jamaica and the Bahamas had disappeared, and to-day it is doubtful if a single full blooded aboriginal of those islands is to be found.

It was Las Casas' mission to stem the torrent of bloodshed and murder, which threatened to devastate and depopulate the American continent as it did the American islands.

Chapter VI.

The Catholic Clergy in the earliest American Colonies.

THE pictures we meet with occasionally in school books, representing Christopher Columbus in the act of taking possession of the Western world in the name of the kings of Spain, with Rev. Father Juan Perez or some other priest at his side, may be edifying, but do not express historical truth. It cannot be proved and it is not true that a clegyman accompanied the World-finder on his first voyage of discovery.

The sacrament of Baptism was administered, for the first time, to aboriginal Americans, in Barcelona, to the seven Indians brought by Columbus to Spain on his first voyage. King Ferdinand and his son John were their godfathers. Then was forged the first link of the chain that united religiously the New to the Old World, where-

by America entered the Communion of Saints.

Three or four Secular priests accompanied Columbus on his second expedition. I have been unable to ascertain their names. Some Franciscan Friars also came at the same time, priests and lay-brothers. One of the priests was named Father Remis, or Remigius. Of the two lay-brothers, one was named Juan de La Duela surnamed the Bermejo (the red, from his ruddy complexion), and the other Juan de Tisin. These were well read and lettered men, who, it was understood, had refused, through humility, to receive priest's orders. These first Franciscans were not Spaniards but Frenchmen from Picardy, and they came to America, Las Casas assures us, through pure zeal, to evangelize the natives. Remigius, after laboring several years in Hispaniola and in Cuba, returned to Europe, and through the influence of Cardinal Ximenes (who was a Franciscan), obtained permission to bring with him to America, about the year 1514, fourteen other Franciscans, all Frenchmen from Picardy. As we shall see, these French Fathers established the

first house of their Order on the American continent, in the Indian village of Cumana on the coast of Venezuela.

The famous Father Büil came as the Ordinary of the first American colony with full ecclesiastical jurisdiction. He was a Benedictine Monk from the kingdom of Aragon, and, as Las Casas surmises, the Abbot of a monastery at the time of his appointment, which was made by Pope Alexander VI. at the request of king Ferdinand.

He was the first American *Vicar Apostolic*, but was not a Bishop, as the following from the Papal Bull of appointment plainly shows: "*Tibi, qui presbiter es . . . . . accedendi et inibi quamdiu volueris commorandi, plenam, liberam et omnimodam facultatem concedimus pariter et elargimur.*" The Holy Father also left him free to return to Spain whenever he wished to, provided he transferred the faculties received to some other Priest, who accompanied him to America.

Büil remained in America not more than ten months, and returned to Spain with Mosen Pedro Margarite. He had

not been in Hispaniola many days when disagreements arose between himself and Christopher Columbus and his brothers. Hernandez de Oviedo, a contemporary historian, says (although Las Casas discredits his statements) that during those dissensions Büil suspended all the divine offices in the Colony to bring Columbus to terms, and that the latter, as a reprisal deprived Büil and the members of his household of their daily rations. Be that as it may, certain it is that on his return to Spain, he endeavored, by misrepresentations, to discredit Columbus and his undertaking. Las Casas leaves us not in doubt that he, Mosen Pedro Margarite and their disgruntled partisans were at the root of the ultimate downfall of the discoverer of America. His name would never have been preserved to history were it not for his associations with the Genoese mariner. The name has been twisted into Boil, Boyle and Boile to make an Irishman of him. There is no doubt that he was a Benedictine Monk bred and born in the kingdom of Aragon; but Spanish or Irish, his name will never shed much lustre on either nation.

The first priests came to the New World well provided with vestments, chalices and all other articles necessary to the celebration of the divine offices. The chasuble, used by the priest, who said the first Mass in America, was given, out of her royal chapel, by Queen Isabella. It did service for many years, and Las Casas pathetically remarks, that, when too old to be used any longer, it continued to be preserved almost as carefully as if it was a relic, "because of its being the gift of the beloved Catholic Queen and the first brought to the Indies."

Every vessel, sailing from Spain for Hispaniola between the years 1493 and 1510, carried at least one clergyman either as chaplain or to remain in the Colonies. At least one Franciscan accompanied Bobadilla to Hispaniola, Father Juan de Trasierra. Neither he however, nor the French Fathers, who had arrived in 1493, crossed the ocean for the fixed purpose of founding a convent of their Order in America. This was done by Father Alonzo de Espinal, who accompanied by twelve other Friars, all Spaniards, arrived in Hispaniola with Ovando in 1502. Their first convent was founded in the City of San Domingo. In 1510 the Franciscans possessed already another house in or near Concepcion de La Vega composed

of eight Friars; and a third one in the Province of Xaragua, in the town which they called Vera Paz.

Alas! they too had their Repartimientos of Indians, not indeed in their own name, but in that of a layman, who made some $5000 a year out of the slaves, and gave enough to support the Friars according to their rule and vow of poverty. The tithes of the church having been ceded by Alexander VI. to the Crown, the secular priests and their churches were supported by the kings as long as there were no Episcopal Sees in existence. Wherever a settlement of Spaniards was made, a priest was assigned to act as its parish priest, with a salary of $100 a year.*)

We know of three substantial churches begun and partially built by Columbus himself; one at Isabella which was probably never finished, because that settlement was soon abandoned; another at Concepcion de La Vega, where he desired to be buried, and a third one at San Domingo.‡)

*) Between the years 1500 and 1560 gold depreciated in value 1000 % owing to the large treasures of the yellow metal found in possession of the Incas of Peru and the rich mines discovered almost everywhere in America. The purchasing power of gold in 1560 was yet five times greater than it is now, so that the earliest American priests were paid a salary equivalent to $1500 of to day.

‡) The church built by Christopher Columbus at

But generally the so-called churches, during the first twenty years of American colonization, were nothing more than a few rough-hewn timbers stuck in the ground with over them a strawthatched roof.

Before the ordination of Las Casas scarcely a voice was raised by either Regular or Secular clergy against the enslavement of the Indians. He tells us how everybody (including himself) was blind about that great sin. The evil had cast deep roots even in the Court of Spain, and corruption in office was rampant during the last years of king Ferdinand's reign.

Don Juan de Fonseca, whom we shall frequently meet in the course of this work, was bishop of Burgos, (though residing at Court) a Privy Councillor to their Majesties, and, for many years, head as we would say now-a-days, of the bureau for Indian affairs. "This Don Juan de Fonseca," says Las Casas, "although an ecclesiastic, an Archdeacon first, then Bishop of Badajoz, then of Palencia, and last of Burgos, was very skillful in the management of worldly affairs,

San Domingo has disappeared altogether. But the Cathedral of that city, begun during the governorship of Diego Columbus in 1514 is the oldest church in America and yet one of the finest. It is famous as the burial place of the Columbuses, father, son and grandson.

especially in gathering armies to fight on the sea, a business better befitting the sailors of Biscay than a bishop. Hence the Kings, as long as they lived, always entrusted him with the fitting out of their fleets."

There was scarcely a family in Spain more influential than the Fonseca. Beside the elder brother Don Alonso, who had inherited the rich family estate, and Don Juan, there was Don Antonio de Fonseca, their brother, the Auditor of State for the Kings, and Don Alonso de Fonseca, their uncle, and Archbishop of Seville.

At the time of Las Casas' ordination, Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, the Bishop of Burgos was working, for his own benefit, in the mines and on the plantations of Hispaniola and Jamaica twelve hundred Indian slaves. No wonder if a few of the earliest American clergymen were found in possession of Repartimientos.

To the sons of St. Dominic, so often painted as the embodiment of tyranny and the tools of the Inquisition, belongs the honor of being the first protectors of American liberty; and the first to raise their voice against the enslavement of the native Indians. Father Domingo de Mendoza, brother of the famous Garcia de Loaysa,

consecutively Superior General of the Dominican Order, Confessor to Emperor Charles V., Bishop of Osma Archbishop of Seville, Cardinal and Minister of State, introduced the Dominicans in the New World. He was not however one of the first to land in Hispaniola. Pedro de Cordova, Antonio Montesino, and Bernardo de Santo Domingo, all three famous in the annals of the early American Church, and all three saintly and learned men landed in San Domingo about the first of October 1510 and there formed the first Community of Dominicans in America. Pedro de Cordova, although only twenty-eight years of age, acted as Superior in the absence of Father Domingo de Mendoza, who, having remained in Spain to recruit more subjects for the American Missions, arrived a few weeks after, with ten or twelve more companions.

The first week in November of the same year we find already young Pedro de Cordova in Concepcion de la Vega, whither he had travelled on foot (a distance of about one hundred miles) to pay his respects to Diego Columbus, the governor, and to apprise him officially of the arrival of the Dominicans. He reached Concepcion on Saturday, and the following day preached

a sermon on the glories of Heaven, which made a powerful impression on the Colonists. During the morning service the Spaniards were told to send their Indians to church in the afternoon for instruction. The natives came in large numbers; and the young Missioner, crucifix in hand and seated on a stool, addressed them by means of an interpreter beginning with the creation of the world and ending with the crucifixion of Christ. Hence the Dominican rule had its origin, which was kept for many years after in Hispaniola and on the continent, of instructing the Indians every Sunday afternoon. The first Dominican convent in the New World was a straw hut donated by a good man named Pedro de Lumbrares, but its first occupants were men picked from different convents in Spain, and eminent for their learning and their virtues. De Lumbrares furnished the Friars with cazabe bread, which formed their ordinary diet, and occasionally with eggs and fish. Add to these some cabbage dressed in oil, when they could get it, and you have the fare of those early Apostles of America. Wheat bread and wine were hard to obtain, even for Altar purposes. Nevertheless they observed scrupulously the primitive rule of their Order, and fasted

seven months in the year. Their beds were made of four forked posts and some hewn boards with over them a sack or mattress filled with straw.

By their sermons, the administration of the Sacraments, and mainly by the example of their lives, they soon succeeded in stamping out certain minor forms of sin, such as the non-observance of fast-days, the practice of usury, etc. But the plague of the colony, the main cause of its degradation, namely the enslaving of the Indians continued its ravages unhampered and unopposed. From their Convent of straw it took the Friars a few months to fully realize the enormity of the evil. As Providence would have it, an outlaw came to open their eyes. Juan Garcez, having killed his wife in a fit of jealousy, had been in hiding for three or four years. Smitten by remorse of conscience and tired of the life of a vagabond, he presented himself one night under cover of darkness at the door of the Monastery, and begged to be received as a lay member of the community. He succeeded in convincing the Fathers that his conversion was sincere, and was admitted. Garcez soon began to entertain the Fathers with graphic descriptions of the horrible cruelties perpetrated by himself

and by other Spaniards on the helpless natives, especially in the work of the mines, and set the good Friars to study the problem of Indian slavery. Prayers and fastings followed in the Community to obtain from God light to adopt the proper means, and fortitude to combat the monster evil. Consultations followed each other among the Friars in rapid succession, and it was decided at last that the tyranny of their countrymen should be attacked from the pulpit. Father Antonio Montesino was chosen for the task. A sermon was prepared and the manuscript was submitted to the approval of all the other Fathers, who, each individually, attached to it his own signature. Then a house to house canvass was made of the town, and the Spaniards, from the Governor down, were invited to hear the sermon the following Sunday, which was the first of Advent of the year 1511. As an inducement to attend, everybody was told that the subject of the sermon would be new and interesting to the whole town. The attendance, it needs not be said, was all that could be desired.

The Governor, Diego Columbus, was in his pew, and his wife, Doña Maria de Toledo, the grand niece of King Ferdinand, was there with all the colonial officers of

the Crown. Montesino ascended the pulpit and gave out his text from the Gospel of the day. "*Vox clamantis in deserto*, the voice of one crying in the desert." Las Casas, who had the original manuscript of that most memorable sermon, left us only a short quotation from the exordium. "I ascended this pulpit to let you know that I am the voice of Christ crying in the wilderness of this Island. Hence it is meet that you listen to it with no ordinary attention, but with all the power of your souls and of your five senses. It will prove to you the strongest, the most rasping, the harshest, the most frightful voice you ever listened to. This voice tells you that all of you are now living and dying in a state of mortal sin, on account of your cruelty and tyranny over these innocent people. Tell me: with what right and with what justice do you subject the Indians to so cruel and to so horrible a slavery? With what authority do you wage your abominable wars against these people, who were living peaceably in their own countries, where you caused infinite numbers of them to die by your unheard of barbarities and slaughter? Why do you overwhelm them with work, and give them not sufficient food to keep them from starving, or medicines to cure

their infirmities? Nay, why do you kill them daily with excessive labor that they may bring you gold? What steps have you taken to have them taught to know God, their Creator, to be baptized, to hear Mass and to keep the Sundays and Holydays? Are you not bound to love them as yourselves? Have you lost your reason, have you lost your senses? or are you buried in a lethargic sleep? Rest assured of it; in the state you are now living, you can no more save your souls than the Moors or the Jews, who have not the faith of Christ."

In the afternoon of that day there was a meeting of the citizens of San Domingo in the Governor's house and a Committee was appointed, with Diego Columbus as chairman, to wait on the Friars for the purpose of reprimanding the preacher and frighten the other members of the Community. They called for Montesino and the Father Superior; but the latter answered the call alone. Who, having been haughtily requested to send for the offending orator, answered with dignity, that he was the Prelate of that Religious Community, and that, if anything was wanted by their lordships, he was there to answer. Seeing that Pedro de Cordova was not to be browbeaten, the

Governor changed tone and tactics and respectfully asked permission to interview Father Montesino. His request having been granted, Diego Columbus delivered, in the name of the whole Committee, a speech, the substance of which was, that, unless the novel doctrine preached that morning was retracted, steps would be taken to bring the haughty preacher to his senses. The Superior answered that he and all the other Fathers were responsible for Montesino's sermon, which had been preached in the name of them all, as the evangelical truth, after mature consideration, and as necessary to the salvation of the Spaniards as well as the Indians of the Island, who were perishing daily under their eyes and received no more care or attention than if they were beasts of the fields. "We are bound," said he, "to preach that doctrine by the profession of faith we made in holy Baptism, and more so by the vows we made in becoming Friars, Preachers of the Truth of Christ."

"If so," said a member of the Committee; "the Friars may as well get their luggage ready to leave for Spain."

"Certainly, my Lords," replied Pedro de Cordova; "it will cause us little trouble to do that."

They had nothing but the clothes they wore.

After much parleying a promise was made that the same Antonio Montesino would preach again on the same subject the following Sunday, and, as far as his conscience would permit, endeavor to please the audience.

The Committee gave it out that the Friar would retract, and the following Sunday the church was packed again to hear the recantation.

Imagine the disappointment of the colonists when the text of the sermon fell in ringing tones from the lips of the undaunted orator, "*I shall repeat my knowledge from the beginning*" (Job, Chapter XXXVI. Verse 3) "and prove my words to be true."

This second sermon was a severer indictment of the Hispano-American audience than the first. The colonists left the church in a rage, but were powerless to gag or silence the brave Friar on account of the ecclesiastical immunities enjoyed by the clergy in those days. They did not however give up the hope of ultimately compelling the Dominicans to eschew their withering denunciations.

The Franciscans, we have seen, enjoyed the partial benefits of a Repartimiento, and

no doubt felt that the Dominican sermons reflected disparagingly on their community. Father Espinal, the Superior of the Spanish Franciscans was engaged to go to Spain to denounce Montesino and the Dominicans to King Ferdinand as teachers of new doctrines and disturbers of the public peace. Thus Friars were pitted against Friars, but the game was not all one-sided, by any means; for Montesino, the Dominican, followed Espinal, the Franciscan, to Court.

Las Casas throughout his works charitably excuses the conduct of the Franciscans on this occasion on the ground of ignorance, as the disciples of St. Francis, unlike those of St. Dominic, were not generally men deeply versed in jurisprudence or in moral Theology. In other words, he grants that Espinal and his confreres acted in good faith.

It must not be forgotten that Juan de Fonseca was then at the head of the bureau for Indian affairs, and that twelve hundred Indians were then at work in the mines and on the plantations of Hispaniola, Jamaica and Porto Rico to replenish his episcopal coffers with gold; that Conchillo, the Secretary of State, was also deriving a fat income from his Repartimientos; that many other courtiers were directly or indirectly

interested in Indian slavery ; and that the royalties collected on the gold mined in America were beginning to ease the heretofore straitened conditions of the Castilian treasury. It will not then be difficult to understand how, on the arrival of the two Friars in Spain, Alonso de Espinal, who was able to display a bundle of letters from Diego Columbus and the other crown officers of Hispaniola, was lionized, while Montesino's Dominican stock was at a discount.

The former was frequently found sitting by the side of the old king conferring with him on transatlantic affairs, whereas the latter saw the doors of the royal palace daily slammed in his face whenever he attempted to obtain an audience. Happily the first champion of American liberty was not to be balked. Having one morning begged in vain to be admitted to the presence of the king, in spite of the efforts of the porters to keep him out, he rushed to the inner royal chamber, and on his knees, "Sire," he said, "I beseech Your Highness to give me audience ; for I have to tell you that, which it is very important you should know."

"Speak, Father;" answered the monarch.

The Friar drew from the folds of his

habit a memorial graphically describing the horrors of American Indian Slavery and read it. Then said the king: "are these things possible?"

"Not only possible," answered the monk, "but they are facts that happen daily. To the pious and kind heart of your Majesty it seems impossible that men be found guilty of them; I knew full well that your Majesty had not commanded them.

"No indeed," Ferdinand replied; "never in my life, by God, did I ever command anything of the kind."

The immediate result of the conference between Montesino and the Spanish King was the appointment of a committee composed of the ablest juris-consults and theologians of the realm to investigate the conduct of the Spaniards towards the Indians. Numerous were the sittings of this commission. But all the witnesses examined, except Montesino, were the defendants themselves, that is, quite a number of colonists, who had come to back and support their champion, Friar Alonso de Espinal. Montesino stood alone to tell the tale of woes of the downtrodden American Indians. Discouraged and depressed he decided to make an effort to convert Espinal himself to the side of justice, because he

knew him to be a conscientious man, a true religious, and that, if he sinned, he sinned through ignorance. He stationed himself one morning at the gate of the Franciscan Convent, where Espinal lodged, and when the latter came out to attend the meeting of the commission, Montesino approached him, and having obtained permission to speak to him, addressed him thus:

"Father, do you expect to take to the next world anything more than this threadbare Friar's habit that you wear, and which was given you in charity? Do you look for something more than to serve God? Why do you consort with these tyrants? Don't you see that they are using you as a tool in their wicked designs? Why do you take sides against the helpless Indians? Is this the pay you give them for having supported you and your brother Friars with the sweat of their brow?" etc.

The address was full of vigor but dictated by a spirit of charity. It converted the well intentioned but simple-minded Franciscan, who thenceforward became the life-long friend of the Dominican, and having turned state's evidence espoused the cause of the unfortunate Indians.

The report of the commission, less the preamble, which I omit, reads as follows:

"1st. The Indians being free men, and your Highness and the Queen (may God admit her to glory) having commanded that they be treated as freemen, we recommend that they be allowed to continue in the enjoyment of their liberty.

2d. We recommend that they be instructed in the Catholic faith, as it is ordered in the bull of the Pope, and as your Majesty have ordered by letter. It must be ordered that due diligence be employed to obtain good results.

3d. We find that your Majesty have the right to exact from the Indians such labor, as will not prevent their being instructed in the Faith, but which, on the contrary, will prove beneficial to them, to the commonwealth, and to your Majesty, who must meet the expenses of their instruction and of the administration of justice among them.

4th. Said labor must not be oppressive, and sufficient time for recreation must be given them every day throughout the year.

5th. They must be allowed to own their own houses and a sufficient amount of land at the discretion of the present or the future governors of the Indies. Let time be given them to properly cultivate said land in their own way.

6th. Let it be ordered that they be kept in as close communication as possible with the Spanish colonists, in order that they may be more easily instructed in the Catholic faith.

7th. Let their labor be paid not in money, but in clothing and other articles useful to their households."

These propositions are not in principle unjust, but unfortunately nothing is said in them about abolishing the system of Repartimientos. The laws formulated (not by the commissioners, who declined the task, but by the bureau of Indian affairs) to regulate, according to the principles laid down in the seven propositions, the relations between the Spaniards and the Indians, while designating the latter as freemen, really did not abolish their slavery. *De jure* they mitigated it greatly, *de facto*, very little, because their execution was left in the hands of those most interested in its perpetuation. Nearly two years had elapsed since Espinal and Montesino had left Hispaniola, when the laws were at last promulgated December the 27, A. D. 1512. They continued in force, with additions and modifications, made always in favor of the Indians, until the year 1543.

I have mentioned that Father Espinal

had come to Spain loaded with letters that represented the Dominicans in America as little less than revolutionists. After reading them, king Ferdinand sent for their Provincial and complained bitterly of the conduct of the American Friars. These complaints soon reached Pedro de Cordova in Hispaniola, who decided to leave for Spain also, in order to assist Montesino in the task of obtaining measures for the freedom of the Indians and at the same time vindicate the conduct and the doctrines of his fellow-friars. He arrived at court when the laws had already been formulated, although they had not yet been promulgated. King Ferdinand received him kindly, and soon conceived of him the opinion that he was, not only an enlightened man, but a Saint; and that opinion, says Las Casas, was not a mistaken one. Pedro de Cordova foresaw clearly that the laws, as then formulated, would fail to correct American abuses or to materially alleviate the oppression of the Indians, and so informed the King. Thereupon the aged monarch begged the youthful monk to revise the laws already made, or to make new ones, and promised to have them enforced. But, unfortunately for America, the Friar declined the task on the plea that it was

beyond the scope of his vocation and the range of his abilities.

At the beginning of the year 1515 the Dominicans established a convent in Cuba, with for subjects, Father Gutierrez de Ampudia, Superior, Bernardo de Santo Domingo and Pedro de San Martin, priests, and Diego de Alberga, deacon. We shall meet again these saintly apostles in the course of this work. In September or October of the same year Pedro de Cordova sent four or five other fathers and the lay brother Juan Garcez, (mentioned above,) to establish the first Dominican convent on the continent, in the Indian village of Chiribichi, which they called Santa Fe de Chiribichi, on the coast of Venezuela. The journey was made in the company of the Franciscan Fathers who went in the same vessel to establish their convent of Cumana.

Chapter VII.

The First American Bishops.

IN 1503 Pope Julius II., at the request of Queen Isabella, erected three episcopal sees in Hispaniola, one of which was to be the metropolitan. But the depopulation of the Island of its aboriginal inhabitants was progressing so rapidly, that the idea of installing bishops in America was abandoned for a time. However in the year 1511 the number of Spanish colonists had so increased in Hispaniola and Porto Rico as to make it advisable to establish new sees, not in the Indian villages selected in 1503, but in the towns that had been built by the Spaniards. The erection of the archiepiscopal see and of its two suffragans was annulled, and in lieu thereof a new one was founded in the city of Concepcion de la Vega, another in San Domingo of Hispaniola, and a third one in the principal settlement of the Island of Porto Rico. All three were made the suffragans of the metropolitan see of Seville. Pedro de Deza became the first bishop of Concepcion de la Vega, where he died not long after taking

possession of his see; Alonso Manso became the first bishop of Porto Rico and the first titular bishop to land in America; Garcia Padilla was elected the first bishop of San Domingo, but died unconsecrated and without taking possession of his see. Padilla was a Franciscan, De Deza a Dominican, and Manso, a secular priest.

On the third day of May 1512 an agreement was drawn by an Apostolic notary between the king of Spain and the newly elected bishops, by which the former ceded to the latter the tithes granted to him by pope Alexander the VI., to be applied to the support of the ordinaries themselves, their clergy, the churches and the hospitals. The crown reserved for itself the *jus patronatus* in the appointments to all the benefices erected or to be erected, to be however exercised only once in each case. A benefice once vacant, it fell within the jurisdiction of the bishop alone to appoint another incumbent from among the legitimate children of the Spanish colonists, and, according to the Canons, by *concursus*, or competitive examination. The bishops bound themselves not to induce the Indians to abandon the labors of the mines directly or indirectly, but on the contrary to admonish them to work more

diligently than ever in mining gold not omitting to let them know that the precious metal was to be employed in making war against the infidels, etc.

Las Casas vehemently attacks this clause of the agreement. But "unfortunately", he tells us, "Bishop Manso himself accepted a Repartimiento, although in all probability he never worked his Indians in the mines."

As illustrating the workings of the intimate union of Church and state prevalent in the sixteenth century, I will give a few more articles of the agreement between the bishops and the king.

1st. The tithes must be collected in kind and not in money.

2d. No tithes shall be collected on metals mined, or on precious stones.

3d. If ecclesiastics shall engage in mining, the same royalties shall be collected on the output of their mines, as on the output of those belonging to seculars. Any ecclesiastic so engaged shall be amenable to the civil tribunals in all law-suits concerning temporal affairs, and, should he plead ecclesiastical immunity, he shall be deprived of his Repartimientos of Indians and loose all his rights to his mines.

4th. Bishops were restrained from or-

daining more than one son in each family.

5th. They bound themselves not to give even the tonsure to any individual, who could not understand and speak the Latin language.

6th. The size of the tonsure must be worn according to the rules laid down in the bull of Julius the II., establishing the American hierarchy.

7th. Clergymen shall wear their hair long enough to fall at least an inch and a half below the ears and a little further down the neck and shoulders.

8th. All clergymen's tabards should be long enough to reach within a few inches of the instep, and should not be variegated, green, red, or of any other dishonest or unbecoming color.

9th. The bishops bound themselves not to establish in America new feasts, or days to be kept holy other than those enjoined by the general law of the Church.

Shortly after his installation as bishop of Porto Rico, Manso, beside the predial tithes, that is, the one tenth of the profits derived from real estate, attempted to collect also from the Spanish settlers what were known as personal tithes, that is, a tenth share of the earnings of their personal industries. The Spaniards refused to pay

them, and the bishop excommunicated them. They in return ostracized him, and, for a time, made it difficult for him to obtain even the means of subsistance.

Disgusted with his American dignity, the prelate left the Island, and returned to his canonry in Salamanca, which he had discreetly failed to resign on his elevation to the episcopal office. Three or four years after we find him in Hispaniola, where he acted as inquisitor for one or two years. Then he returned to Porto Rico, and governed his diocese for quite a number of years and died at a ripe old age. Las Casas speaks of him as "a Theologian," and a person who led "a very good life," "honest," "humble," "plain," but "not much of a business man." Still he says that, as to the Indians, Bishop Manso, like the other Spaniards, felt as little responsibility as if they were not men.

Pedro de Deza, the first bishop of Concepcion de la Vega, did not come to take possession of his see immediately after his consecration, but sent as Vicar General to govern it one Don Carlos de Aragon, a Doctor in Theology, from the University of Paris. He was a nobleman, and, it was whispered, a relative of king Ferdinand, who, on the death of queen Isabella, had

taken care to fill all the lucrative offices in Hispaniola with subjects from his own kingdom.

Don Carlos was quite an orator, and soon found himself at home in the then capital of the New World, where he was the only clergyman with a D. D. affixed to his name, the Dominicans excepted, who lived in retirement and were hated by the colonists, on account of Father Montesino's and other similar sermons of theirs. The whole city turned out to hear Don Carlos whenever he ascended the pulpit. The *aura popularis*, always dangerous to clergymen, soon turned the head of the Parisian Doctor. In his sermons he quoted more frequently his Parisian professor, (uncovering his head whenever he mentioned his name) than the gospel. If his doctrines did not agree with those of the Angelic Doctor, he would remark: "May St. Thomas forgive me, but in this matter he did not know what he talked about." It soon reached the ears of the Dominicans that the Vicar General was preaching dangerous and unsound doctrines, and they lost no time in writing to their superiors in Spain about them. Meanwhile the now renowned preacher found Hispaniola too narrow a field for the display of his talents

and returned to Spain. There his dashing oratory and the novelty of his doctrines attracted immense crowds to hear him. He was invited to preach at court where the Dominicans went to hear him. His false doctrines were taken down, and Don Carlos denounced to the Inquisition. He was made to recant in the Cathedral of Burgos of which Juan de Fonseca was the bishop.

"In what I have said about this or that other matter I confess that I was wrong;" said Don Carlos.

"Say that you lied;" called the bishop from his throne.

"I say that I lied;" answered Don Carlos.

He was condemned to close confinement for life in a monastery, and the first American vicar general never was heard of again. Even the influence of king Ferdinand to have his noble vassal and relative dealt with more gently, availed him nothing.

The first episcopal see in Cuba was established in Baracoa, and its first bishop elect was Bernardo de Mesa, who however never took possession of it and died bishop of Elna in Catalonia.

In 1523 Charles V. (who was by birth

and education Flemish) having succeeded Ferdinand and Isabella to the throne of Spain, caused a Flemish Friar to be appointed to succeed Bernardo de Mesa. His name was John de Wite. He resigned in 1527, and retired to Bruges, where he died and was buried in the monastery of St. Dominic. Under the administration of de Wite the see was removed to Santiago de Cuba, where it continues to this day, having however been made an archbishopric in 1768, when the new see of Havana was created and made a suffragan of Santiago de Cuba.

The first diocese established on the American Continent was that of Santa Maria de la Antigua on the Gulf of Darien. Its first bishop was Juan Cabedo, a Franciscan, who landed there, being already consecrated, with the famous Pedrarias de Avila in June 1514. Several Franciscans accompanied him. His administration reflected little honor on the American episcopate.

Chapter VIII.

Las Casas in Cuba.

The three foregoing chapters, besides affording the reader the first pages of ecclesiastical American history, were necessary to make the biography and the life-work of Las Casas intelligible. We left him a newly ordained priest at the age of thirtysix in the town of Concepcion de la Vega in Hispaniola. He exercised the ministry but a few months in that Island. Diego Velasquez, the richest American colonist, was chosen by Diego Columbus, the governor of Hispaniola, to subject the Indians of Cuba to the Spanish crown and to form settlements of Spaniards. Velasquez and Las Casas had been neighbors and friends in Hispaniola, and the former was scarcely settled in Cuba, when he wrote to the young priest to come over and be the chaplain of his expeditionary little army of conquest.

Las Casas joined him in Baracoa where the foundations of the first white settlement in Cuba had already been cast.*

* At Baracoa Las Casas began to fall in familiarly with Hernando Cortez, the future conqueror of

Before his arrival, Velasquez had sent his lieutenant, Panfilo de Narvaez, to the neighboring province of Bayamo to induce the Indians, by suasion, if possible, by force of arms, if necessary, to give their allegiance to the kings of Spain. Narvaez owed his appointment, as Velasquez' lieutenant, to their mutual friendship contracted in Spain before their emigration to America. Velasquez had sent to Jamaica for Narvaez, where the latter had no small share in the subjugation of, and in the cruelties perpetrated against the natives of that Island. Having been, for several years, in constant contact with the Indians, and a daily witness of their helplessness to resist the Spaniards, Narvaez had grown

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Mexico. He gives (Ch. XXVII. Book III. of Hist. de las Ind.) of him the following: "Diego Velasquez had two secretaries, Hernando Cortez and Andres de Duero, who was almost a pigmy in stature (tamaño como un codo) but brave and very discreet in his word. He was a good penman. Cortez had the advantage over him of being a Latin scholar and enjoying the title of Bachelor of Law. But he was a great talker, and enjoyed a good joke. As he was not as discreet as Duero, he was not either as good a secretary. He was a wise and able man, although he did not have the appearance of knowing much, or of possessing all the ability which he displayed later in his arduous undertakings. He was a native of Medellin, and the son of a squire, of my acquaintance, lowly and poor, although, it was said, of gentle extraction."

rash and imprudent. In Bayamo he had but a handful of Spanish followers, all on foot, except himself. Seven thousand Indians surprised him one night, while sound asleep, and surrounded his camp. On waking Narvaez was struck in the chest by a stone, which caused him to remark to the Franciscan Friar, who stood by his side: "Father, they have killed me." But his attendants threw over his mare the saddle, which was loaded with little bells, and the captain, barefooted and in his night clothes, sprang on the animal, and galloped around. The naked Indians at the sight of what appeared to them a monster, and at the tinkling of the bells, were seized with fright, took to the mountains and never stopped until they reached the neighboring province of Camaguey. Velasquez, on hearing of the occurrence, hastened to join Narvaez with reinforcements, and Las Casas accompanied him. On their arrival in Bayamo, they found it deserted, and learned from some Indians, who had remained behind, because too old or too sick to travel, that Narvaez was in pursuit of the fleeing hordes.

If in Hispaniola Velasquez had formed a correct judgement of Las Casas' worth as a layman, in Baracoa and in Bayamo, where

they spent several months together, ample opportunity was afforded him for studying and appreciating the talents and the zeal of the young ecclesiastic, whose irreproachable conduct soon engendered feelings not only of respect, but of genuine admiration. It goes without saying that their old friendship and his sacerdotal character gained for the Clerigo a wholesome influence over the haughty Conquistador. Las Casas, speaking of himself (Hist. de las Ind., Book III. Chap. XXIII.) quaintly says: "Diego Velasquez loved him, and did many good things on his advice, being influenced especially by his sermons."

Velasquez was about to be married, and having heard of his bride's and her father's arrival in Baracoa, hastened thither to celebrate his wedding, leaving in Bayamo fifty Spaniards with Juan de Grijalva (a beardless youth) as their captain. The young man, whose commission was to last only until Narvaez should return from Camaguey, was instructed to look upon the Clerigo as upon a father, and to undertake nothing without his advice. The boy proved obedient.

The Spaniards, at home as well as in camp, on their journeys by sea and by land were constantly surrounded by friendly

natives, who rendered them every service, sometimes of their own accord, through their savage admiration of the white man, but more frequently because they were virtually their slaves. The Indians were the carriers, the footmen, the cooks, the fishermen, the hunters, the scouts, the valets, etc. of the white man. Every Spaniard in the field had usually a score or more of native servants; and wherever there were a hundred Spaniards there went with them not less than a thousand Indians, who were usually treated by the white masters little better than beasts of burden. The young chaplain of the little Spanish army was, on the contrary, uniformly kind and fatherly to them, who did not fail to observe that the white men themselves treated the priest reverentially and with deference, and that whatever act of mercy went out from the Spaniard to the Indian was generally traceable to the black robe.

Las Casas had not been many months in Cuba, when his name and the fame of his kindness to the red man became known all over the Island. They called him *Behique*, that is Priest, or man of God and conceived for him sentiments of love, reverence and fear.

Letters, everywhere in America, when

the white man first came in contact with the Indians, always caused in the untutored mind of the natives feelings of amazement. It was beyond their comprehension how a bit of paper could tell the wishes of one man to another many miles away. Letters were to them mysterious, supernatural or diabolical agencies for which they, naturally enough, had the greatest respect.

So masterful had become the ascendency of the first American priest over the Indians, that he could command compliance with his smallest wishes, not only when in their company, but by means of bits of paper scrawled over and carefully inserted into a piece of hollow reed. A messenger would be sent to the cacique of this or that tribe, who in presenting himself said: "Behique wishes you and your people to do so and so; here is his letter." The reed was broken and the paper seen; if it contained any writing or not was immaterial, Behique was obeyed. If not, word was sent back to him giving the reasons why his wishes could not be complied with.

Narvaez failed to overtake the fugitives, and, fearing to plunge into the thickly settled neighborhood of Camaguey, returned to Bayamo with the handful of Spaniards

who had followed him. Many weeks had not passed, when provisions in Camaguey, where the population had suddenly been doubled, began to fail; and the refugees found themselves in the necessity of returning to Bayamo. They arrived in droves; and, with tears in their eyes, asked forgiveness of the Spaniards for what they had done. They had been foolish and inconsiderate, they said, were sorry, and promised thereafter to comply with the white men's wishes and to serve them. The sight was touching. A necklace of beads (than which the Westindian native held nothing more precious) was left at the feet of Behique, and another of Captain Narvaez to propitiate them. Here the minister of the God of peace addressed to them words of consolation. "Fear not, my children;" he said, "it is all over. Go to your homes, and nobody will hurt you."

Word was sent to Velasquez that the province of Bayamo had been pacified,* and asking for further instructions. When these came, they were to the effect that Narvaez, with his old companions in arms, together with those whom Velasquez himself had brought to Bayamo (about one

* With the *Conquistadores, to pacify* meant *to subjugate.*

hundred Spaniards in all) should proceed to Camaguey, and thence westward to the other provinces of the Island to pacify them. Narvaez was to take with him the Clerigo, as his advisor, who was also requested by another private letter, to follow the expedition. Thus Las Casas spent with Narvaez nearly two years and traversed Cuba from east to west engaged in its pacification. Their first halt was made at an Indian pueblo, eighty or ninety miles from Bayamo, called Cueiba.

The Missionary annals recounting the evangelization of Spanish-America are full of incidents which show that the conversion of the natives, especially those of the Westindian islands, would not have been any extraordinarily difficult task, if, to accomplish it, the Apostolic method of employing no other arms than the crucifix and the catechism had been adopted at the beginning, as it was, with perfect success, a few years later by the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Jesuits nearly all over the continent.

Of such incidents no other is more touching than the following given by Las Casas himself. We have seen how Alonso de Ojeda had effected a settlement on the continent near the Gulf of Darien in the year

1509, and how the poisoned arrows of the Indians of that coast had compelled him and his colonists to shut themselves up in a little fort which they had built and called San Sebastian. Driven by starvation, Ojeda, towards the end of that same year 1509, endeavored, with seventy companions to make his way back to Hispaniola in a rickety brigantine, in order to obtain provisions and revictual the distressed garrison of San Sebastian.

They failed to make Hispaniola and were cast by the high seas on the coast of Cuba which was yet uninhabited by white men. With scanty provisions and without arms, they endeavored to reach on foot the eastern end of the Island intending hence to cross on canoes over to Hispaniola. In constant dread of the natives of the interior, they plodded along the low and deserted lands of the sea-shore, and soon found themselves engulfed in an interminable swamp with water and mud, first to their knees, then to their waists, and last to their necks. Their tramp lasted for thirty days, during which half of their number perished of hunger and exhaustion. The hardiest of them reached at last the Indian pueblo of Cueyba, where they were hospitably received by the Cacique. Ojeda had a small

but beautiful picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which he had brought from Spain, and with which he had never parted during all his wanderings in Hispaniola, on the Continent and in Cuba. Many times during the thirty days spent in the swamp had he drawn from his empty knapsack and spread on the knee of a cypress tree the beloved image and invoked the assistance of the Mother of Christ. He had vowed to leave the picture with the Indians and to teach them how to venerate the Blessed Mary, should he succeed to reach dry land in safety. At Cueyba, where he stopped several days, to rest and recuperate, he fulfilled his vow. As best he could he explained who the Blessed Virgin was and made a present of the picture to the Cacique. A wooden shrine was built, a little altar erected therein, and the image installed in the midst of a profusion of ornaments made of reeds, flowers and cotton cloth. One Pedro de Ordas crossed over to Jamaica in a pirogue manned by Indians. Panfilo de Narvaez was the Captain of the vessel that went to rescue Ojeda and his surviving companions. Most of these settled in Jamaica and when Narvaez passed to Cuba to become the Lieutenant of Velasquez, some of them were amongst his followers.

Las Casas, whom we have left in Cueyba, heard of Ojeda's picture and, as was natural, looked it up. It was found that the Indians of the neighborhood had persevered for more than three years in the veneration of their picture. The chapel, the altar, the ornaments were there, and sweet couplets had been composed in the native dialect in her honor. A congregation gathered daily to sing the praises of the Mother of God. The picture had now, not only an artistic but an historical value, and the Missioner thought of obtaining possession of it. A talk was had with the Cacique and a proposal made for the exchange of that picture for another, not quite as pretty, which the Clerigo had with him. Suddenly a cloud overshadowed the Chief's countenance, and as no answer was made, nothing more was said about it. Next morning the priest repaired to the Oratorio to celebrate Mass in it and found that the painting was gone. The Indians told him that their lord the Cacique had removed it during the night and made away with it to the mountains, for fear that Behique should forcibly deprive him of his beloved picture of the Mother of Christ. Needless to say that the sacerdotal heart of Las Casas was deeply touched by the in-

cident, and word was sent to the Cacique to come back, with the assurance, that the Father would not only allow him to possess his own picture, but would present him with the other also. The Chief returned, his people remained in possession of their treasure, and the Spaniards departed for the province of Camaguey.

The peculiar duties which Las Casas imposed on himself during this one or two years of campaigning were certainly unique in their nature. He would precede the soldiery by a few hours or by one or two days, accompanied by three or four Spaniards and his acolytes, who were Indian boys from Hispaniola understanding both the native and the Spanish language, and by him educated and trained to wait on him at the altar and in the administration of the Sacraments. On arriving at a pueblo, where the little army intended to halt, the Cacique was first interviewed, and the order given that all the inhabitants should be gathered in one portion of the village, and vacate a number of houses or huts sufficient for the accommodation of the one hundred Spaniards and the one thousand Indians from Hispaniola, Jamaica and Cuba itself, who followed in their trail. Provisions were next gathered and made

ready for the white visitors ; these measures the priest had found necessary to prevent his countrymen from robbing the natives and from insulting their women. At his request Narvaez issued an order forbidding, under severe penalties, his followers from passing from their side of the village to that reserved for the Indians, and from entering their houses. Parents were instructed to have the little ones ready to be baptized. On the arrival of the Captain and his men a meal was served, then an instruction given, on the principal mysteries of the Christian religion, to the villagers and to the assembled multitudes, who invariably flocked to behold and to wonder at the bearded white men and especially at the three or four horses ridden by the Spanish officers. Baptism was then administered to the children. The ascendancy of the first American priest, I must repeat it, appears almost incredible. He had not been many months on the Islands, when he found it unnecessary to act in person as the forerunner or herald of Narvaez. It was enough to send an Indian scout with the customary piece of paper purporting to be a letter. The messenger would say to the Chief: "the Christians are coming, and the Father writes that you

vacate so many houses, that you gather provisions to feed them, and have the children ready for Baptism. If you don't do so, Behique will be much displeased." He was invariably obeyed. The phenomenon is partially explained by the rapidity with which news travelled among the Indians everywhere in America. Moreover, thousands of natives from Hispaniola had passed into Cuba to escape the labors of the mines and the tyranny of the Spaniards. As the language of the Cubans was the same as that of the Haytiens, the former generally knew the treatment they were to expect from the Spanish marauders, unless their friend Behique should protect them. Hence they learned how to love him before they ever saw him, and realized that compliance with his wishes was conducive to their welfare.

Had Las Casas, at this period, been left in Cuba with a dozen zealous clergymen to coöperate with him, without another white man to obstruct the Gospel of peace, it is more than probable that his long life would have sufficed to christianize and to civilize the Pearl of the Antilles. How different would then have been that Island's history? But good men seldom have their way in this world; and I must pass regretfully to

describe a deed and a scene as sickening as the deeds of the Terrorists during the French revolution.

Narvaez and his one hundred men were approaching a large Indian town called Caonao, in the province of Camaguey, whither the Clerigo had preceded them. Before entering the pueblo, they stopped to breakfast on the banks of a creek that was nearly dry and full of grinding stones. The meal over, each soldier sharpened his sword, and the march was resumed. The town was found to possess a Casa Grande (large house), or a sort of town-hall spacious enough to accommodate not less than five hundred people. In front of it was a public square, where provisions had been gathered in abundance to feed the Spaniards and their Indian retinues. A steward, appointed for the purpose by the Clerigo was busy parcelling out rations in the presence of Captain Narvaez, who was on horseback, while two thousand Cubans sat cross-legged in a circle around the plaza gazing in wonderment over the bearded men and their prancing horses. One of the soldiers, as if possessed by an infernal fury, draws the newly sharpened sword, and begins to slash the naked Indians right and left, men, women and children. As if this had been

a preconcerted signal, nearly a hundred other swords were unscabbared and a general massacre began. Inside the Casa Grande there were five hundred of the more timid who had not ventured near the Spaniards. They also were slaughtered, with the exception of a few of the most agile ones amongst them, who managed to climb to the timbers of the roof, and thus to save themselves. Meanwhile Narvaez stood on horseback impassible and indifferent. Las Casas, at the time, was resting in another house a little distance off with the Indian carriers who, tired from the journey, had stretched themselves on the floor. With him were also five Spaniards, who, as soon as the blows from their fellow-soldiers, and the shrieks of the wounded Indians were heard, drew their swords, and were ready to massacre those also who were within the building and their own servants. The Clerigo induced them to desist, and then rushed hither and thither through the woods to stop his countrymen from pursuing the fleeing Indians and carrying the massacre further. In less than it takes to tell it, the peaceful pueblo was turned into a charnel house. The streets were literally flowing with blood, and made almost impassable by the bodies of the dead and the

dying. Narvaez, the carnage over, on meeting Las Casas, said: "Father, what do you think of the work of these our Spaniards?"

The Clerigo's answer was characteristic of him: "I commend them to your care and to that of the devil." He was then boiling with holy indignation, but in his old age, while soberly writing his Historia de Las Indias, the Protector of the Indians could not explain this and other simular deeds of wanton and savage cruelty on the part of his countrymen otherwise than by saying that they were driven to them by the devil. Manuel José Quintana, one of his biographers, assigns a more natural reason. "The true explanation," says he, "is to be found in the position, in which the Spaniards always found themselves, of one against a hundred. Fixed in the resolution to conquer and to oppress, they found themselves perishing at every step they made, the victims of their own temerity and rashness, and they imagined that, at every step, they saw the vengeance of the Indians overtaking them. Every equivocal action of the Indians, every uncertain sign spoke to them of dangers. The instinct of self preservation became in them phrenetic and blinded them to see no

other way to safety except by striking terror with promptness and audacity and to kill, in order not to be killed."

Quintana's defense is eloquent and plausible, especially if we remember the surprise of Bayamo, during which Narvaez was nearly killed, and that some of his companions, who had done service with Ojeda in the Gulf of Darien, had there seen many of their countrymen perish in an ambuscade and by the poisoned arrows of of the Indians, etc. But the explanation would have been more satisfactory had he added that Narvaez and his followers were a lot of criminals, as we know them to have been, steeped in blood, and for whom bloodsheding had become a passion and a pastime.

Having made of Caonáo a graveyard, the Spaniards left it and went to camp on a large open field, where the cassaba plant grew abundantly and afforded them means of subsistence. It would have been useless to march to the next pueblo; for the natives, in mortal terror of the new-comers, had deserted their homes for miles and miles around, to hide on the mountains and on the numerous little Islands that fringe the southern coast of Cuba.

The train of native servants that followed

Las Casas was no small one. They were not pressed into his service, but entered it of their own free will, attracted by the fame that the Clerigo was the friend of the Americans, because he treated them kindly, and to seek protection under his ecclesiastical mantle from the oppression of his countrymen. Among them was a venerable old man by the name of Comacho, who had followed him from Hispaniola, and who, on account of his experience, long services, and trustworthiness had been constituted a sort of majordomo and factotum over the priest's household.

Not the sign of a Cuban had been seen around the camp for many days and weeks, when, one night, a young man, under cover of darkness, glided to the hut in which Comacho slept, who was already known very generally as the priest's chief domestic servant. The youth told Comacho that he wished to enter the service of Behique and that a younger brother of his would do likewise, if they were accepted. Comacho approved of his resolution and assured him that he and his brother would be welcomed by the Father, who, he said, was very good. While with him, and in the companionship of his other servants nobody would be allowed to do him harm. The old man

lost no time in imparting the news to the Clerigo.

A messenger, who could be coaxed into going to the hiding villagers and induce them to come back to their homes on the assurance that no further violence would be done to them, was badly needed. Las Casas called the young man, reassured him, embraced him and caressed him, promising at the same time to take him and his brother into his service. Cheerfully the boy agreed to look up the people of a neighboring village, who were the owners of the field on which the Spaniards were encamped and to induce them to come back within a certain number of days. Comacho, who was already a Christian, and spoke Spanish, dubbed the new convert Adrianico, who, armed with a letter from Behique, departed for his mission. The days agreed upon had passed and Adrianico had not returned, and everybody had given him up, except Comacho, who insisted that the young man would keep his word. Late of an evening the Father descried a crowd of Indians, men, women and children, led by Adrianico and his brother to the number of one hundred and eighty, loaded with their little belongings and with presents for the Spaniards, approach his tent silently

like a flock of sheep. The words of consolation and love that the priest addressed them can be more easily imagined than written. As soon as reassured that harm would not be done to them they repaired to their wigwams beyond the hills. But Adrianico remained with Behique to enjoy his protection and the friendship of Comacho. Next day every native in the province of Camaguey knew that the white men would kill no more Indians and returned to their homes. They were pacified. In familiar intercourse with the Indians the priest learned that, two or three hundred miles to the west, there were two Spanish women and one man, held in captivity by the natives of the province of Havana. A messenger was at once dispatched with a letter to the local Cacique, instructing him to bring the captives to a certain place and to deliver them to the Christians. Should the Cacique fail to do so, Behique would be much displeased.

Narvaez ordered, shortly after, a march across the Island from south east to north west, and in a few days a village was reached on the northern shore, called Caharate, all the houses of which were built on piles driven in the water. The army

remained in the town fifteen days, during which, a canoe, well manned by Indians, was seen to arrive, and to make for the house where the priest lodged. They landed the two white women mentioned above, who were found to be naked as the natives who accompanied them. The man was in possession of another Cacique, and it required another letter to fetch him. The women, having been left in each other's company had opportunities to converse together in the Spanish language, and had not forgotten it; but the man, who had not seen a countryman of his in several years, had acquired all the habits and traits of an Indian and for a few days could not speak his native tongue. Las Casas married the women to two of the Spanish soldiers.

The reader no doubt is interested in knowing how the trio had met with their sad fate. Four or five years before a party of Spaniards had landed in what is yet known as the Port of Matanzas; if for repairs, to get water, or wood, or driven by a storm, it is not said. While attempting to cross the Bay in a canoe, manned by Indians, the boat was purposely capsized, and all the Spaniards who could not swim, were drowned. The two women and the

man (who was then a boy) were rescued and incorporated in the tribe, but seven others, who had swam ashore were hung. Hence the name Matanzas (slaughter).

From Caharate the Spaniards, now by land and again by sea, passed into the province of Havana, finding everywhere on the route the pueblos deserted.

The deeds of the white men in Caonao were by this time well known all over the Island, and on their approach the natives took to the mountains. Las Casas wrote, i. e. sent to each of the Caciques an old piece of paper with the request, that he should meet him in a certain locality, and the assurance that the Christians would not harm them. They all came, eighteen or nineteen of them.

Incredible as it may appear, Narvaez promptly caused them all to be cast in irons, and would have burned them at the stake the following morning, had not the threats of Las Casas to report him to Velasquez and to the king, rather than his entreaties, saved the lives of the poor wretches. They were all set at liberty, except the most influential one, who remained a captive until Velasquez released him on the occasion of his visit to Narvaez in the Port of Xagua, as I am about to relate.

Chapter IX.

Las Casas a Planter, a Miner, and a Slave-owner in Cuba.

Las Casas had by this time spent nearly two years in Cuba, and had travelled it from east to west, crossing it several times from north to south and from shore to shore. Meanwhile Velasquez had founded Baracoa, settling it with Spaniards and establishing civil government among them. The Island was now pacified, that is, the Indians had everywhere bent their necks to the yoke of the Spaniards, and Velasquez was ready to make new settlements in the most desirable locations to be found on the Island. But, as he had seen but little of the country himself, it was found advisable to have a conference with Narvaez and Las Casas, who had looked it over. Word was therefore sent to them to meet him in Xagua, whither he travelled himself by land and by sea from Baracoa, accompanied by quite a number of prospecting white men. Velasquez, Narvaez and Las Casas having come together, settled for a few months on

a little Island near by the Port, where a pueblo of Indians was located, at whose expense they lived. Thence frequent excursions were made in the interior to more thoroughly explore the country. A gold mine was discovered on the river Arimao, that emptied in the sea two or three miles from the Port.

The locations for the settlements, or future towns, were thus decided upon, and the first was founded some twenty five miles east of the Port of Xagua and was called, as it is yet, Trinidad. The second was located in the interior, twenty five miles north-east of Trinidad, and almost in the centre of the Island. It was given the name, which it retains to this day, of Sancti Spiritus. The third settlement was made sixty miles further east on the northern coast, and the name, which it was given then, it retains now, i. e. Puerto Principe. The fourth was named by Velasquez San Salvador de Bayamo, but it soon came to be known simply as Bayamo, from the ancient province of that name. The fifth was named Santiago, but owing to the numerous Santiagos in the Spanish dominions, it soon lengthened its name, which it retains yet, to Santiago de Cuba. All of these foundations were made in the

year 1514. There were already some white settlers where Havana stands now in 1516, but it did not get a corporate existence before the year 1519, the port being known till then as Puerto de Carenas. Velasquez founded Havana on the southern shore in 1515, but the settlement was removed, some two years after, to its present location.

It is remarkable that Baracoa, Trinidad, Sancti Spiritus, Bayamo, Santiago de Cuba, Puerto Principe and Havana are yet the principal towns of Cuba; Cienfuegos and Cardenas being the only cities of any importance that do not date back to the time of Velasquez; and indeed they are not as old as the past century. The seven cities were located by Velasquez in different parts of the Island with a view to bringing into requisition the labor of all the aboriginal inhabitants for the benefit of the white settlers, and to render impossible any general uprising. In fact, inside of two or three years practically all the natives had been parcelled out into Repartimientos, that is, had been made slaves.

Las Casas, who was a friend of Velasquez, and had had so important a share in the work of pacification by saving, with his presence, the lives of thousands of Indians, was assigned one of the very best

Repartimientos. The Cacique of a pueblo called Canarreo, in the immediate neighborhood of Xagua with all his Indians were *Encomendados*, which literally translated means: were intrusted to his care; but in fact were turned over to him to be used as slaves. With the Repartimiento of the Indians usually went a grant of the lands that belonged to them. It was near Xagua on the river Arimao that Las Casas settled, and began his planting and mining operations.

While yet in Hispaniola a lasting friendship had been contracted by the Clerigo with a very good man by the name of Pedro de Renteria, who, unlike his countrymen in America, had never been affected by the gold fever; on the contrary, his main object in life was to serve God. It was his delight to spend much of his time in meditating on the eternal truths, reading the lives of the Saints and other similar exercises of piety. Worldly affairs had little attraction for him, and he seemed to be unfit for them, although he was well educated for a layman of his times, and could read the New Testament in Latin. Humble and plain in his ways and generous to a fault he leaned on the friendship of the warmhearted, active young clergyman who was all

business and eminently a man of action. Renteria had come to Cuba with Las Casas, but remained in Baracoa, while the priest was engaged with Narvaez in the exploration and pacification of the Island. Now that he had joined his friend in Xagua, Velasquez gave him a Repartimiento adjoining that of the Clerigo; or rather the two made but one, of which Las Casas became the exclusive manager, as if he was the sole owner. Every thing was in common between the two friends, the Priest attending to business while the layman did most of the praying. Their Indians could be counted by the hundred, and it took but a few days to build a large house in which they lived for about a year, with Comacho as the chief steward. Las Casas lost no time in laying the foundations for future wealth, and a plantation was laid out and the Indians set to work to cultivate it. He did not neglect to send some of them to the mines to gather some gold; for improvements on a large scale and in a new country required ready cash. It soon began to be whispered among the Spaniards that the Licenciado was acquiring a taste for the good things of this world, although he must have given no scandal; for being then a secular Priest with no vow of

poverty, he had a right to retain, make use of, and improve his private patrimony. But his manner of acquiring wealth by the enforced labor of the Indians was radically wrong. The Protector of the Indians, forty years after, when writing his *Historia de las Indias*, did not fail to make an open confession of his fault to posterity. He wrote of himself: "The Father began by their (the Indians') labor to make for himself plantations, and to send some of them to the mines, paying more attention to these things than to the instruction of the Indians, which was the main obligation of his calling. But in those days the Father was as blind as the laymen whom he considered his children; although in his treatment of the Indians he always was humane, merciful and charitable, because he was endowed with these natural inclinations, and also because he knew that the law of God required it. However he did little more than look after their material welfare and to see to it that they should not be harassed too much with excessive labor. Everything concerning their souls was by him and by every one else overlooked; a plague, which, Our Lord, in his inscrutable designs, allowed to infect the Spaniards in all walks of life, in the Indies."

I surmise that the humility of Las Casas in his old age, (he wrote the passage quoted above, when he was nearly ninety years old) caused him to overdraw the picture of the error of his early days. His sin, if sin it was, was one of ignorance rather than of malice. From a lawyer he had suddenly been ordained a priest and entered the active ministry. Hispaniola, between the years 1502 and 1510 was not naturally the best Seminary in the world for a complete course of moral and dogmatic theology. Be that as it may, his blindness lasted not more than a year, and then the scales fell, almost suddenly, from his eyes. At no time does he seem to have neglected his priestly duties, to the whites at least, who were Catholics. But let us allow him to speak for himself again: "The Clerigo Bartolomé de Las Casas was very busy with his plantations, ... forgetful of the obligation that bound him to instruct his Indians and to lead them to the bosom of the Church of Christ. Diego Velasquez had left Xagua with the other Spaniards, his followers, and had gone to found the settlement which he called Sancti Spiritus. There was then no other clergyman on the Island, except a Friar, who was at Baracoa; Pentecost Sunday being

not far off, the said Clerigo Bartolomé de Las Casas bethought himself that he would leave his home on the river Arimao, and go to say Mass and preach for them (the Spaniards of Sancti Spiritus) on that day."

While preparing his sermon he fell in with certain passages of the scriptures, amongst others that of Ecclesiasticus (Chp. XXXIV, Verse 21). "The offering of him who sacrifiseth of a thing wrongfully gotten is stained etc.," which led him to reflect and consider and then to doubt, if, forcing the Indians to work for himself was not wrong. He remembered that the Dominicans in Hispaniola had inveighed in their sermons against the enslavement of the natives, and how, on a certain occasion, he himself, then already a priest, had gone to confession to one of them, and had been refused absolution because he would not consent to give up the Indians he there held as slaves, as he now held others in Cuba. He had then contended honestly with the Friar but with frivolous, if plausible, arguments that Indian slavery was not wrong. But now the light of revelation and the experience of every day showing how they perished by the hundred in the mines and elsewhere, murdered by oppressive labor, convinced him forcibly and for

ever, that it was not right for the Spaniards to possess themselves, for their own use, of the natives' lands, goods and persons.

Las Casas was not the man to compromise with the devil; he reasoned that if it was wrong for him to have slaves, it was likewise wrong for the other Spaniards, and he resolved to tell them so in the sermon he was about to preach to them on Pentecost Sunday of the year 1514. He knew full well that perhaps it would have been in the interest of his Indians that he should retain them under his own guardianship, allowing them to enjoy perfect liberty and at the same time prevent their falling into the hands of someone else who would kill them with overwork and starvation. But in that case it might have been said: "after all, he keeps Indians himself; why does he not give them up, if he believes as he preaches that to keep them is tyranny?" His sermon would have had no effect, and he resolved to give them up.

Some time before, the Clerigo and Renteria had put together all the ready cash at their command, some two thousand dollars (which however had a purchasing power equal to $20,000 of to-day), had chartered a schooner, and, with it, Renteria had gone to Jamaica to buy seeds, cattle, hogs, pro-

visions, etc. with which to stock their farm.

Giving up his plantation and his Repartimiento meant for the Priest poverty. Nothing was left him in Cuba but his mare. He saddled the animal and undertook the journey from Xagua to Sancti Spiritus, a distance of perhaps seventy miles, to say Mass, preach and make the renunciation of his Repartimiento into the hands of Governor Velasquez. While he wends his way through the virgin forest, with only his trusted Comacho and his altar boys as companions, we shall visit Renteria in Jamaica.

He had arrived there just before Lent, and instead of putting up with a brother of his, who was settled on the Island, took lodgings in the Franciscan Convent that had already been founded there; and spent the whole of the penitential season with the Friars, and whenever not actually engaged in the business that had brought him to Jamaica, spent his time in prayer and meditation. For some time he too had been troubled by scruples about holding Indians in his service as slaves, but he reasoned, that, should he give them up they would fare much worse. However, before he got ready to sail for Cuba he had formed a resolution.

The Cuban Indians, he could not help foreseeing it, would soon disappear, as most of those of Hispaniola had already disappeared. To put a stop to the ravages and devastation caused by his countrymen was not in his power, but perhaps some at least of the little ones could be saved. His resolution was, on his arrival in Cuba, to leave for Spain, there to interview the King, and obtain permission for founding one or more orphan asylums where the orphans of the victims of Spanish greed and cruelty could be raised like Christians and educated to assert their freedom as such on their arriving at the age of maturity. Renteria had just settled on this plan when he received a letter from the Clerigo asking him to hasten his departure from Jamaica, because he (Las Casas) had decided to take a trip to Spain on a mission, the object of which would, no doubt, fill his friend's heart with joy as soon as it would be explained to him.

Las Casas, on arriving in Sancti Spiritus, made a formal renunciation of his Repartimiento to Governor Velasquez, who said in astonishment: "Father, reflect well on what you are doing; God knows that I wish to see you prosperous and rich, and therefore I do not admit, for the present,

your renunciation. You have fifteen days to think the matter over; after which you may come back and tell me what you intend to do."

"Señor," answered Las Casas: "consider the fifteen days as already past, and, should I hereafter ever come to you with tears of blood in my eyes to beg you to give me back my Indians, may God never forgive you, if, through love of me, you should grant my request."

I need not say much of the Clerigo's sermon on that Pentecost Sunday. It made a profound impression, but, like the one preached by Montesino in San Domingo a few years before, it converted nobody. That Friar and this secular Priest were made of the same metal and cast in the same mould. It had not been long since Las Casas had returned to Xagua, when Renteria's schooner hove in sight. To jump into a canoe and to row a league off shore was done by the Clerigo inside a half an hour. "What did your Reverence mean," said Renteria on seeing the priest, "by writing me that you want to go to Castile? I am the man to go, not you, and as soon as I shall tell you why, I know you'll be pleased to see me start." Las Casas replied: "Wait until we reach land,

and when I shall have told you why, I know you'll think it better that I go."

They unbosomed themselves to each other, and the layman at once agreed that the priest should go; first, because his mission was of greater importance; and second, because being a Clergyman and a Licenciado, he would have easier access to court, and his words would have more weight.

The cargo was sold at a handsome profit, and a goodly sum realized, wherewith to pay Las Casas' passage to Spain and defray his expenses while there. Both priest and layman left their Repartimiento without a pang, which, in a very short time, would have made them independently wealthy.

Every reader of "*Historia de las Indias*" is vexed with Las Casas for telling us not a word more about his holy friend Renteria, and it is really a pity that history gives nothing more of him. His name however shall be linked for all times to that of the Protector of the Indians, and, no doubt, in the world beyond he now enjoys a blessed immortality, while in this world his memory shall never die.

Las Casas was yet in Cuba during the early months of 1515. Two weeks before Easter he had the pleasure of welcoming

to the Island four Dominican Friars, who, as I have already mentioned, had been sent by Father Pedro de Cordova to found a convent and to evangelize the Natives. The very next day after their arrival (very probably in the town of Trinidad) and every day until Easter Sunday inclusive, they preached, and every body was pleased with their sermons. But they had not yet touched on the subject of Indian slavery.

On Easter Monday the Dominicans requested the Clerigo to preach himself because "they wished to hear him." "He accepted, and in order that his doctrine about the oppression of the Indians, which he had preached during the past seven or eight months, might be placed in its proper light; and inasmuch as some believed that to oppress and to kill men was no sin, others doubted it, some joked about it, and others murmured, he gathered all the different propositions he had advanced during those months on the subject, especially those that had proved most disagreeable and most rasping to his countrymen, and reaffirmed them all together more vehemently and with greater freedom than ever, in the presence of the Friars."

These enjoyed the sermon and rejoiced at hearing the bitter truth preached with so

much evangelical liberty. The Clerigo gave the sermons he had preached before the arrival of the Dominicans to Father Bernardo de Santo Domingo to read. "The good Friar," remarks Las Casas apparently with some degree of self complacency, "swore that, had he known that in Cuba there was a priest who preached such sermons, he would never have set foot on the Island, because if the Spaniards had not been converted by him, and had not stopped their murders, he could not hope to do them any good with his preaching."

The following Low Sunday Father Bernardo preached again, and, as was natural for that day, took for his subject: "I am the good Shepherd." The substance of the sermon was that they, the Spaniards, were not the shepherds of the Indians, but hirelings, tyrants and hungry wolves, who tore them to pieces and devoured them. It frightened somewhat the audience, but did not convert them. As it was plainly to be seen that the cruel tyranny of the Spaniards did not diminish, but was rather on the increase, the same Father Bernardo ascended the pulpit once more on Trinity Sunday, and so threatened the sinners with the divine vengeance, as to cause the Clerigo himself to tremble in his seat. The sermon

would perhaps be, even now interesting reading, but Las Casas only preserved the following passage which I give in full.

"Since we have come among you we have spoken plainly about the sinful condition of your souls, because you have oppressed, tyrannized and murdered these people. Not only you have not given any sign of repentance, but you are doing worse every day, shedding the blood of so many, who have done you no harm. I beg the Incarnate God that, on the day of judgement, the blood he shed for them may be a witness against your cruelty. You will not then be able to plead ignorance and to say that you had not been instructed and warned about the wrongs you are now perpetrating against these people. As you are now the witnesses of each other's crimes, so will you then be of the punishment that shall be meted out to you." The audience left the church with downcast and sad countenances, but unconverted.

The Dominicans were now convinced that they could do no good in Cuba ; not to the Indians, while they were oppressed and destroyed by the Christians, nor to the Spaniards, to whom the Sacraments could not be administered while they persisted in living in a state of mortal sin. It was

therefore decided that their Superior, Gutierre de Ampudia and Deacon Diego de Alberca should go over to Hispaniola in company of Las Casas, who was now about to leave for Spain. They went to lay before their Prelate the condition of religious affairs in Cuba. The three sailed either from Santiago de Cuba or from Baracoa and landed in the Port of Yguana which was the nearest to the coast of Cuba. Thence they proposed to cross, as best they could, the Island in order to reach the city of San Domingo. But they had travelled but a few leagues when the Dominican Father fell sick of a fever. In a few days he so far recovered as to be able to travel horseback, and the Clerigo loaned him his mare in order that, accompanied, as he was, by the Deacon, who travelled on foot, he might continue on his journey. Las Casas remained behind to procure another horse, his intention being to overtake them on the road by following a shorter route. Father Gutierre had gone three days on his journey, when he relapsed and died on the road, at the house of a Spaniard, who kept a cattle farm. The Clerigo and Diego de Alberta reached their destination in safety.

The Clerigo's reasons for travelling to

San Domingo were: 1st, because then all ships bound for Spain either sailed or touched at that port; 2d, to settle up his temporal affairs in Hispaniola or to place them in safe hands; 3d, to inform his friend Pedro de Cordova about the object of his journey to Europe, which was to inform the king about the real state of affairs in his American possessions, and to endeavor to obtain some legislation that would stop the further oppression and annihilation of the American natives; and 4th, to obtain from the same Pedro de Cordova letters of recommendation to the Dominicans in Spain whereby he hoped to be able to secure the influence and the support that their powerful Order could afford him at court.

Las Casas was quick and impetuous in forming resolutions, but prudent, persevering and shrewd in the choice of means to carry them out. Before leaving Cuba, he took care to obtain from Velasquez a written testimonial, (and to have it properly authenticated by a notary public) of the important services he had rendered to the Spanish crown and to religion in the pacification of the Island. This precaution was taken to forestall calumnies on the part of the Spanish settlers, who, as

soon as the real object of his journey to Spain should be known, would not unlikely endeavor to misrepresent him at court. And in order that, on his arrival in Spain, he should not find every door shut against him by the machinations and intrigues of those, who were interested in Indian slavery, if the object of his voyage was known, he allowed his countrymen, on his departure from Cuba, to remain under the impression that he was going to Paris to study, and to obtain, if possible, the coveted degree of that University. Thus Velasquez and his associates were thrown off their guard, and the Licenciado parted on the best of terms with them all.

Pedro de Cordova had but lately returned from old Castile, and we know of his doings there from what has been said already. To use a familiar expression, he was quite familiar with the lay of the land there, and could not promise much success to Las Casas in his mission. After hearing, in confidence, the intentions of the Priest, he said: "Father, your labors shall not be lost, because God will keep a good account of them; but rest assured, that, while the present King lives, you will not accomplish that, which both, you and I, so much desire."

However the Friar praised the Priest's intentions and encouraged him to leave nothing undone to save the lives of the unfortunate natives. The interview ended with the following by Las Casas: "Father, I will try every possible way, and I shall shirk no labors or trials that I may have to undergo, to accomplish what I have undertaken, and I hope that God will help me. If I fail I shall have the satisfaction of having done what a good Christian should do. Your Reverence, I hope, will pray and have others to pray for me." From this conference there sprung between the Clerigo and the Friar a friendship, which ended only in death; and Las Casas took pride in consigning the fact to history, that good Father Pedro loved the Licenciado as much, at least, as any of his own fellow-friars.

The hatred which most of the Spaniards in Hispaniola bore the Dominicans, on account of their sermons, had not yet abated. They lived in strictest poverty, sometimes lacking even the necessaries of life. Their convent was as yet but half built, and they could not see their way to finish it. It was therefore decided that Father Montesino should travel to the old country once more in order to solicit from aged king Fer-

dinand, on whom he and Pedro de Cordova had made a favorable impression on their former visit, sufficient alms to build their church and complete their convent. Montesino's experience at court might at the same time be of service to the Clerigo. In September 1515 I find the Priest and the Friar on board the same ship, and it is not rash to say that no better couple ever crossed the Atlantic together or for a holier purpose. On their arrival in Seville, after a prosperous voyage, Montesino went to lodge in a convent of his Order, while Las Casas put up with some of his relatives.

Chapter X.

Las Casas' First Visit to the Court of Spain.

MONTESINO introduced the Clerigo in complimentary terms to Diego de Deza, the Archbishop of Seville, who was a Dominican. This Prelate had been at one time the Confessor of king Ferdinand, and was on terms so intimate with the old Ruler, that, having heard that His Majesty was in poor health, he invited him to come and live in Seville where the mild climate favored old age; and the invitation had been accepted.

His Grace, the Archbishop, gave the Clerigo a letter of introduction to the king, warmly recommending the object of his mission at court. Other letters to the dignitaries surrounding the royal person were intended to facilitate the priest's admission to the king's presence.

Ferdinand was then in the city of Placencia, and Las Casas went to see him there, arriving a few days before Christmas. At that time Juan de Fonseca and the

Secretary of State, Lope Conchillos, were at the head of the bureau for Indian affairs and nothing of importance was done that did not pass through their hands. It would have been folly to apply to them for assistance to redress the wrongs perpetrated on the American Indians; for they themselves kept hundreds of them at work in the mines of Hispaniola, Jamaica, Cuba and Porto Rico extracting gold to fill their own coffers. And, as it generally happens with absentee landlords, the victims of their greed were treated even more cruelly than the Indians belonging to other Repartimientos. Las Casas therefore avoided meeting them, and took care to let them know nothing of his business at court. On the 23d of December he was admitted for a few moments to the presence of the king, and in a few words explained why he had come from the Indies, how the Indians were there perishing daily and disappearing by the thousands, dying without faith and without the sacraments, and how the Spaniards were responsible for their deaths. The Clerigo knew full and well that Ferdinand's predominant passion was avarice, and he did not neglect to say that the Crown was vitally interested in the preservation of the American natives. He then

begged the king to give him an opportunity of speaking to him more leisurely about American affairs whenever it would suit His Majesty to grant him another audience. It was granted; and there and then the king made an appointment to meet again the Transatlantic Clergyman one day within the Octave of Christmas. The Clerigo presented Deza's letter and then, kissing the royal hand, withdrew. The reader must have already perceived that the Clerigo would have made no mean diplomatist; but his adversaries were more than his matches. Deza's letter naturally went to Fonseca and to Conchillos. Those two worthies were fully acquainted with Las Casas' doings in the Indies during the past two or three years.

Velasquez was but the lieutenant of Diego Columbus in Cuba, who, in virtue of his prerogatives of viceroy of all the islands discovered by his father, was, ex-officio, Governor of Cuba. When Las Casas left the Island, Velasquez feared less the impetuous Clerigo should mention to Admiral Diego Columbus, or to the king something unfavorable to himself, concerning the treatment that the Indians received under his administration. It must be mentioned also that Velasquez was just

then treacherously and ungratefully trying to supplant the viceroy in Cuba, to whom he owed his present important position. Panfilo Narvaez had therefore arrived in Spain about the same time as Las Casas and Montesino for the purpose of frustrating their efforts in behalf of the Indians, and especially for the purpose of acting as solicitor for Velasquez in trying to obtain for him the independent governorship of Cuba. Pasamonte, the royal treasurer at San Domingo, and a confidential creature of king Ferdinand, was vitally interested in Indian slavery and in supporting Velasquez by supplanting Diego Columbus. On the departure of Las Casas from Cuba, Velasquez had written to Pasamonte about the style of preaching which the Clerigo had adopted, and Pasamonte had sent the letter to the two largest slave owners, Fonseca and Conchillo. Narvaez was also the bearer of a gift to the two State ministers in the shape of a Repartimiento of Cuban Indians, in whose territory a fat gold mine had lately been discovered. This, it was thought, would easily pave Velasquez' way to the Governorship.

Las Casas' next step was to interview Tomas de Matienso, a Dominican, and Fer-

dinand's present confessor in order to prevail on him to use his influence with the King in behalf of the Indians. Matesino lost no time in doing so, and Ferdinand, through him, made a second appointment to meet Las Casas in Seville, where, he promised, American affairs would be effectually attended to. On the advice of the royal confessor the Clerigo paid a visit to the Secretary Conchillos and to his Grace of Burgos. The former saw in the Priest a dangerous reformer, who, with his humanitarian theories might unsettle the several transcontinental estates, which had lately fallen into his possession. Hence he received him very courteously, flattered him, and gave him to understand that he might become, if he chose, the wearer of the most precious mitre in America. The attempt at covert bribery proved futile. "Conchillos' blandishment and caresses," says Las Casas of himself, "had little effect on the Clerigo to prevent him from accomplishing the task, which God had inspired him to choose as his own."

The Archbishop was approached with more formality ; a memorial was prepared and presented reciting and describing the cruel tyranny of the Spaniards over the Indians. Fonseca perused it and, in the

presence of the priest, insultingly remarked: "What an unwitty fool you are; what business of mine is it or of the King?" To which in stentorian tones the Clerigo replied; "Is it none of your business or of the King that so many souls should perish? O great and eternal God, whose business shall it then be?" and he left. Thus Fonseca, forgetful of his divine calling, endeavored to crush with the weight of his authority a simple, justice-loving Priest.

Las Casas was in Seville before the arrival of the King, acquainting Diego de Deza, the Archbishop, of the different steps he had taken and begging him to use his influence in obtaining a protracted audience in which sufficient attention should be paid to American affairs. He desired that it should be held in the presence of Fonseca and of Conchillos, in order that an opportunity might be afforded him of formulating a withering indictment, before the King, of the two officials, making them responsible for the murders and massacres that were desolating the West Indian Islands. But a messenger arrived announcing the death of king Ferdinand, which had taken place the 23d day of January 1516. The work in behalf of the unfortunate Americans was to be done all over again.

The heir to the throne of Castile and of Aragon, Charles V. was then a mere boy of sixteen and resided in Flanders. Nothing daunted, Las Casas resolved to travel to that far off country to ask of the new monarch redress for the wrongs that were decimating the Indians beyond the Atlantic. On his way to Flanders he stopped at Madrid.

A bit of history is here necessary to make clear this period of Las Casas' life. Charles V. (the grand-son of king Ferdinand), or his advisors, had known for some time past that Ferdinand was in feeble health and that his demise could not be far off. Hence Adrian, the tutor of Charles, and Dean of the University of Louvain had been sent as Ambassador to the court of Spain, with secret instructions in writing to take charge of the reins of government on the death of the failing monarch. On the other hand, Ferdinand had appointed regent the famous Franciscan Friar Francisco Ximenez de Cisnero, the Cardinal of Spain, until such a time as his grandson should take charge of the kingdom himself. Adrian (the future pope) and Ximenez ruled jointly and harmoniously for nearly two years, over the destinies of the most powerful nation in Christendom. Adrian how-

ever, who never learned how to converse in the Spanish language, discreetly allowed the great Ximenez to be the real regent, contenting himself with affixing his signature to all state papers as *Ambassador.*

Las Casas on his arrival at Madrid, presented to Adrian a memorial in Latin, in which the cruelties and oppression of the Indians were once more graphically described. The document shocked the Flemish prelate, who was naturally of a mild and compassionate disposition. Without more ado, he passed to the apartments of Ximenez (they lodged in the same house) and showed him the memorial asking if it was possible that the barbarities therein described were being perpetrated in the Indies. The Cardinal, who had not been left in ignorance of the true state of affairs in the Indies by his brother Friars, the Franciscans, answered in the affirmative. "Then," said Adrian, "the Clerigo need not go to Flanders to look for a remedy to the evils afflicting his protegées beyond the Atlantic. It shall be provided for here and now in old Castile." Conferences after conferences were held between Las Casas, Ximenez and Adrian, in which one Licenciado Zapata, Doctor Carbajal and Palacios Rubios, all eminent jurists, disinterested in

Indian slavery, and lovers of justice also took part. Fonseca and Conchillos were carefully excluded, and Indian affairs were, for the first time attended to without their baneful coöperation. The laws enacted in 1512 ostensibly for the protection of the Indians were carefully gone over and studied. They were unjust, Las Casas claimed, and the King had been cajoled into signing them by his ministers, who were interested in Indian slavery. They did not provide for the proper feeding and maintenance of the wretches, while they were at work for the Spaniards in the mines and in the fields. Hence they died by the thousands of starvation and want. Only on Sunday were they allowed any meat, as one of the laws provided that each Indian should be given one pound of it a week.

At one of the meetings, at which the Clerigo made the foregoing pleading, the private secretary of Conchillos was called and made to produce the law and to read it. The scribe read it, not as it had been enacted, but interpolating words that were intended to shield his master from shame. "That law," said Las Casas, "says no such a thing."

The Cardinal called upon the clerk to read it a second time.

It was done; but the interpolation was inserted again.

"That law says no such thing," repeated the priest, who knew it by heart, this time in thundering tones.

Ximenez vexed at his boldness, said: "Be silent, or otherwise mind your words."

Las Casas: "May it please your Lordship to have my head cut off if what that individual has just read is contained in the law."

The manuscript was snatched from the clerk's hands and it proved that the Clerigo was correct, and that an attempt had been made at forgery, if not in writing, in word.

The outcome of the conferences was the appointment of Doctor Palacios Rubios (who always proved himself the friend of the Indians) and of Las Casas as a committee to devise means and measures which would insure justice and protection to the oppressed American natives. At the suggestion of the Clerigo, Father Montesino, who had just arrived in Madrid, was added to the Committee. But he and Palacios Rubios, fully aware that Las Casas, by his fifteen years residence in Hispaniola and Cuba, better than any one else, had learned how deep the knife should sink to cure Spanish corruption and Spanish tyranny,

and knowing the Clerigo to be a jurist of no mean calibre, left to him the task of drafting a scheme of legislation that would shield the helpless Indian against the rapacity and cruelty of the white man. The ground work of the report which the Clerigo made in a few days was:

1st. The system of Repartimientos must be abolished *in toto*, and the Indians treated like other free vassals of the Crown.

2d. Spaniards in the Indies must henceforth live of their own industry, commerce or labor as best they can, instead of spending their time in demoralizing idleness or in making slaves of the natives as they had done heretofore.

Montesino and Palacios Rubios approved the report, the latter polishing it and giving it the proper form of a state paper. This was read and approved, with slight modifications by the full Council of State. Decrees were then formulated, and Las Casas entrusted with the task of pointing out or suggesting a person or persons well qualified, in his opinion, to execute them. The decrees meant nothing less than the revolutionizing of all economical conditions in the American colonies, the shattering of fortunes already made or in a fair way to be made, and the placing of the masters

on a level with their slaves. No easy task; nor were all the necessary qualifications to such an executive officer easily to be found in the same individual or individuals. Add to this that the Clerigo had been absent from Spain since he had left the academical halls of the University of Salamanca, and was acquainted with few of his own countrymen. Very wisely therefore he decided to leave the choice of the personal to Ximenez, and contented himself with pointing out the qualifications that he should possess, who would accept this important and difficult mission.

Experience had shown that men were easily blinded by the glitter of American gold. Pasamonte, Diego Columbus, Ovando, Bobadilla, the great Genoese mariner himself, one and all had been, more or less, affected by it. Evidently the proper man to effect a reformation should have no worldly interest to nurse, and no longing for self agrandisement to satisfy. The great Dominican and Franciscan Orders could furnish many men, able and saintly, who, bound by vows of poverty and obedience, were proof against the temptations of avarice and ambition. But the remembrance was yet fresh in the minds of all how Montesino, a Dominican, and Espinal,

a Franciscan, had appeared in Court five years before; Montesino to plead for the Indians, and Espinal to defend the Spaniards. While it seemed desirable that one or more members of a religious community should be sent beyond the seas, as officers of the Crown, to free the Americans from the thraldom of servitude, it was at the same time advisable to avoid creating any jealousy between the two powerful, and, to some extent, rival mendicant Orders. Ximenez therefore cast his eyes on the monks of St. Jerome, then numerous in Spain, and requested their Superior General to select, from amongst his subjects, three men to go to America to set the Indians free. The Superior promised to make an answer in a few weeks. Meanwhile a general Chapter of the Order was held in their mother house of San Bartolomé de Supiana, and twelve monks were selected, out of which number, the Cardinal could make his choice of three, or of as many as would be of service to the mission.

Nearly a year had now elapsed since Las Casas' arrival in Spain. The American Clerigo's doings had become well known to his enemies, and to the enemies of the Indians, while it was no secret that the great Cardinal regent and Adrian had formed an

exalted opinion of the American priest. Ximenez had more than once praised his zeal in the presence of the highest court officials extolling his disinterestedness in coming from so far and in crossing the dangerous Atlantic at his own expense, with no worldly motive in view, but for the exclusive purpose of pleading in behalf of of a downtrodden race. ....The Cardinal had said on a certain occasion, when Las Casas had just left his presense, "no doubt this Clerigo was sent here by divine Providence." After another conference between the two cardinals and the priest Adrian remarked "*Multa mirabilla audivimus de Johanne*," applying the words to Las Casas.

As was to be expected, the American priest soon became the object of the hatred and of the calumnies of the Spanish colonists. It had been learned in Santo Domingo, Cuba, Jamaica, Porto Rico etc. that the Licenciado had not gone to Paris to study, but that he was at court, they said, plotting to ruin them. Hence delegation after delegation arrived in Spain from America to endeavor to undo his work. Ximenez was an uncompromising lover of justice. He had not always been a Friar, and knew the world, especially his country-

men, and like all great statesmen was a reader of men's character. The slave owners of America dared not approach the stern old Regent, but they swarmed around the three Monks who had been selected as the heralds of liberty to the red man. While waiting in Madrid for their credentials and other documents defining their duties, and the extent of their powers and jurisdiction in American affairs, the well meaning, but unexperienced Jeronimites, who had seldom looked beyond the walls of their monastic cells, lodged at first with Las Casas. But they soon thought it necessary to learn from his opponents also the true conditions of the Indians, and thus allowed their minds to be poisoned by the misrepresentations, insinuations, lies and calumnies of the Spanish colonists. They removed to a hospital kept by some lay brothers of their Order, where they felt freer to listen to whosoever had aught to tell them about the Indies. When a ship was at last placed at their disposal, on which they were to cross the Atlantic, they alleged frivolous pretexts, but politely refused to have the Clerigo as their travelling companion, although the latter had been appointed as their official advisor. Before leaving Madrid their dispositions and their

prejudices had become so well known that it was feared by well meaning men, that little good would be done to the Indians by their mission. Good Palacios Rubios chanced one day to hear their views and remarked: "Upon my faith, Fathers, it seems to me that you have little of that charity, which is necessary to the proper management of this important affair with which the King has entrusted you." He then went to Ximenez to persuade him to abandon the idea of sending the Monks to America. But the Cardinal was found dangerously ill, and could not be seen; while Palacios had to leave the capital for other official duties. Ximenez recovered, and lost no time in drafting the several decrees and instructions by which Las Casas, the three monks and Alonzo de Zuazo, who was to go to the Indies as Judge *de Residentia*, were to be governed. It must be remarked that Judges *de Residentia* had power to investigate the official conduct of government officers, and to try them for their delinquencies. Zuazo's jurisdiction extended to all the Crown officers in America. The decrees, the execution of which was entrusted to the Jeronimites, were quite numerous. By one of these they were commanded, on their arrival in Ame-

rica, to deprive at once the members of the Royal Council and other Spaniards not residing in the Indies of their Repartimientos. As this decree was the work of the Clerigo and by him executed, it may be imagined if the love of Fonseca, Conchillos, etc. was thereby increased. A second one also deprived all the judges and other Crown officers in America of their Indians. By a third Zuazo was instructed to try them all for maladministration and malfeasance in office. The instructions given to the monks of St. Jerome were minute and voluminous. They were the work of Las Casas, although mutilated and disfigured by the Council of State. They substantially contain the legislation adopted twenty five years after (through the efforts of Las Casas) by which perhaps the majority of the native Americans of Mexico, Central and South America were saved, civilized and christianized. They form one of the most important documents concerning the early history of America, which, as far as I know, has never appeared in English. I shall therefore give it in full under its own original title of:

Memorial or Instruction to be given to the Fathers, who, by command of His Most Reverend Lordship (Ximenez) and of the Señor Ambassador are going to reform the Indies.

"The first thing to be done by the Fathers, who are going thither, as far as can be done, is to visit personally each Island, in order to inform themselves of the number of the Caciques and the number of their respective Indians, and of all other Indians to be found in each one of the Islands. They must next find out how they (the Indians) have been treated by the individuals to whose Repartimientos they belong, and by the governors, judges and other ministers. Let them reduce to writing their findings, in order that proper measures may be adopted in the premises. While visiting the Islands, especially Hispaniola, Cuba, San Juan (Porto Rico) and Jamaica let them study the topography, particularly in the neighborhoods where gold mines are located, and let them take notes of the places which are well suited for the establishing of villages, whence the Indians may conveniently attend the work of the mines and where rivers be found for their fisheries and good lands to cultivate. Let them begin their work in Hispaniola

and Jamaica and push thence to Cuba and San Juan. The villages to be established should be composed of about three hundred families each, and as many houses should be built as necessary according to their customs; and the same should be sufficiently large to accommodate an increase in the families, which increase, no doubt, will come by the grace of God.

A church, as good as means will allow, must be built in each village with a public square in front of it, and regular streets.* A house larger and better than the others must be built for the Cacique on the public square, because it will naturally become the meeting place for the gatherings of the villagers. In locating the pueblo (village) the wishes of the Cacique should be gratified as much as possible, in order that their feelings may not be wounded in their having to change their place of habitation. Let the Fathers explain to them that all these things are done for their welfare and in order that they be better treated than

* The sameness of arrangement in the public buildings, of churches and of streets in almost every old village, town or city of Mexico, Central and South America, from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, and from Texas to Argentine and Chili attracts the attention of every traveller. It had its origin in this Memorial and is therefore attributable to Las Casas.

heretofore. As to those who are found far away from the mines, let them form pueblos in their own neighborhoods and let them there raise cattle, breadstuffs, cotton and other things, and out of them let them pay a reasonable tribute or tax to the king. This must be done in those Islands where gold is not found, which nevertheless should remain inhabited, because it would grieve the Indians to remove to some far away point, and because climatic changes would be dangerous to them. The Savannah (level lands around the City of San Domingo) must remain inhabited on account of its proximity to the port, and the advantages it affords to the commerce with Cuba and the continent.

Proper territorial boundaries should be assigned to the pueblos, giving to each of them enough of the adjacent land, thus providing for that increase of population which is expected through the grace of God. The best of these lands should be parcelled out among the villagers in proportion to the size of their families and to their social rank, so that they may plant trees and other things, and raise cazabe to make their bread. To the Caciques should be assigned four times as much land as to an ordinary man of the people. The rest

of the land should be left in common for raising hogs and grazing cattle. The Caciques and their Indians must be settled in villages to be founded in the neighborhood of their native homes in order that they may gather into them cheerfully. Let negotiations be entered into with the Caciques with a view to their bringing their people into the villages of their own free accord, if possible, without any other inducement, and let the Caciques exercise care in governing and ruling over their people in the manner to be stated hereafter. If the Indians of one Cacique be numerous enough to form a pueblo alone, let them do it; if not, let a sufficient number of the nearest ones bring their subjects together, and let each Cacique continue to exercise authority over his own Indians, and let the minor chiefs obey him, whom they were accustomed to recognize as their superior, who should be given jurisdiction over the entire pueblo jointly with the Friar or secular Priest in charge of the administration of the pueblo. If any present or future Spanish settler shall desire to marry an heiress to a Caciqueship, when no male heir should be living, let it be done with the consent of the acting parish priest and the administrator of the pueblo.

The Spaniard so married shall be recognized, obeyed and served as the Cacique his predecessor, in the same manner as other Caciques. Thus it will soon come to pass that all the Caciques will be Spaniards and many expenses will be spared.

Each pueblo must have its own separate jurisdiction, and its Cacique must exercise it not only over the delinquents from amongst his own people, but also over the subjects of the inferior chiefs, who may be living in that pueblo. This must be understood only of minor offences punishable with nothing worse than a whipping, and even this must not be done without the consent of the Religious or Clerigo in charge of the parish. Jurisdiction over more serious crimes belongs to the king's civil courts. If the Caciques themselves should do what they ought not, or infringe upon the rights of their inferiors, it shall be the duty of the ordinary civil tribunals to punish them. The officers of the pueblo shall be elected by the acting parish priest, the Cacique and the administrator, and in case of disagreement by a majority of them. And, as it is necessary that good order be established and maintained in each pueblo, it is deemed advisable that an administrator be appointed for one, two, three or more

villages according to the number of people in them, who should live in a stone house in some centrally located place, but not within the precincts of the pueblo itself, in order that the Indians may not be harassed by the members of his household, or quarrel with them. The administrator should be a Spanish settler and a conscientious man, chosen from among those who are known to have always treated well the Indians of their Repartimientos, and whose character should give promise that he will fulfill the duties of his office faithfully. These duties shall be to visit the pueblo or pueblos of his charge, see to it that the Caciques, especially the principal one of each place, make their Indians adopt and live according to the rules of civilized life, each one in his own house and with his own family; that he make them attend to their work in the mines, in the fields, in raising cattle and other things which the Indians should do, as shall be hereinafter explained. He must be forbidden from molesting the Indians, and from making them work with promises of rewards, more than they are obliged to. He should also be made to understand that he is responsible to God for any abuse of his power. Upon assuming the duties of his office he should be

made to take a solemn oath to perform them conscientiously; and if ever after he fails to do so, he shall be punished by the courts according to the laws of his Majesty, the King. For the proper performance of his duties he should keep with him three or four Spaniards from Castile or from some other part of Spain; and a sufficient number of arms. He should not allow the Caciques or their Indians to keep in their possession any weapons belonging to themselves, except such as shall be deemed necessary to hunt. If he should choose, or if it should be found necessary to keep more employees, he may do so, provided that he pays them a competent salary in the presence of the parish priest. He shall also be allowed to keep, as members of his household, not more than six Indians, provided they enter his service of their free accord, provided he shall not send them to work in the mines, but employ them only on his own premises, and provided they remain free to quit his service and return to the pueblo to which they belong whenever they should become dissatisfied with their position. The administrator and the Religious or Clerigo must do their best to reduce the Caciques and their Indians to a civilized manner of life, making

them wear clothes, sleep in beds, and take care of the implements or other articles entrusted to their keeping. They must see to it that each man be satisfied to live with his own and lawful wife, not allowing him to quit her, and that the women live chastely. If any of them should commit adultery, on the complaint of her husband, the Cacique must punish her and her accomplice, although the punishment must not exceed a whipping administered with the consent of the administrator and of the acting parish priest. Let him likewise take care that the Cacique or their Indians do not gamble, barter, sell or give away their belongings without his own or the priest's permission. An exception must be made for eatables or of bona fide alms. They should not be permitted to eat on the floor. The administrators must draw a salary proportionate to their charge, their work and their necessary expenses. Half of their salaries shall be paid by the King, and the other half by the pueblo or pueblos by them administered. The administrators must be married men, in order that the inconveniences, which otherwise might arise, may be avoided, unless a person be found of such a character that he may be trusted, even if he is not married. One of

the administrator's duties shall be to keep a registry of all the Caciques, and of the number of persons in each family and in each pueblo, in order that, if any one should run away, absent himself, or fail to do his duty, it may be easily found out.

In order that the Indians may be properly instructed in our holy faith, and their spiritual wants properly attended to, there must be in each pueblo a Religious or a Clerigo, whose duty it shall be to give them instructions adapted to their capacity, to administer the sacraments and to preach to them on Sundays and Feastdays and to make them understand how, and why they should pay, for God's sake, the tithes or the first fruits of the earth to the Church and her ministers, who hear their confessions, and minister them the sacraments, bury them, when dead, and pray for them. The priest must see that they attend Mass and sit in good order in church, the men on one side and the women on the other. The clergyman shall be bound to say Mass on Sundays and Feastdays and on whatever other days he shall choose to do so. He shall also see that Mass be said on Sundays and Feastdays in the churches, which shall be erected at the mining camps. The clergymen's salaries shall be paid out

of the tithes of each pueblo, and they shall also be entitled to ordinary perquisites and offerings that may be made voluntarily by men or women of cazabe, chili etc. They shall not be entitled to any fees for hearing confessions, administering the other sacraments, marrying people, or for burying the dead. In the afternoons of Sundays and Feastdays they shall ring the church bells, and call together the people to teach them catechism; and, should anybody refuse to come, he must be punished moderately, and the punishment must be administered publicly, in order that it may serve as a warning to others.

A sacristan must also be appointed to attend to the church. He should be an Indian, if a competent one be found in the pueblo; if not, a white man must be selected. It shall be his duty to teach the Indian children, especially the sons of the Caciques, how to read, write and speak the Spanish language until they shall be nine years of age. He must also do his best to induce the Caciques and their people to speak Spanish. A hospice must also be built in the pueblo, wherein to shelter and to care for the sick, and for aged persons, who can work no longer, as well as for the orphan children. For the

maintenance of the hospice the pueblo shall be required to make and to cultivate a plantation of 50,000 *Montones.** As it is provided that a married man with his wife be given charge of the establishment, it shall be his duty to solicit contributions to help supporting it; and inasmuch as the market, for the selling of meat, shall be public property, a pound of meat shall be given daily for every inmate of the hospice, the keeper and his wife included. The distribution of the meat shall be made in the presence of the Cacique or of the parish priest. The male Indians of each pueblo, twenty years of age, and not over fifty, shall be bound to the following contribution of labor. At all times one third of them shall be employed in the work of the mines, and, if any be sick or disabled, they must be substituted by others, out of the other two-thirds. They shall go to work at sunrise, or shortly after, and after the noonday meal, they shall have, for rest and recreation, three hours; after which they shall work until sunset. Every able-bodied man shall be employed in the work of the mines four months of the year, at such times as the Cacique may designate, provided that one-third of them be always at

* The artificial heaps or hills of dirt, in which the cazabe was cultivated, were called *montones*.

work. Women shall not be obliged to work in the mines, unless they do so of their own accord, and with their husband's consent. When so employed each one of them shall count as one man in making the one-third spoken of above. Let the Caciques send their men to work in squads, and with each squad a foreman, who must be selected from among the Indians themselves; whose duty shall be to make his men work, to show them how to gather the gold, and to act in the capacity of miner; for experience has taught that it is not advisable to have Spaniards act as miners or taskmasters. When an Indian shall have given the number of work-days required of him, he shall be allowed to return to his home to properly work the land allotted to him, and the Cacique, the acting parish priest and the administrator must see to it, that he work it properly.

As the Cacique naturally will require much work for the cultivation of his land, every one of his Indians shall be required to contribute fifteen days without wages or board each year, and the children, the women, and old men must attend to keeping his crops free from grass, whenever necessary. The Indians not at work in the mines must be compelled to work moderately on their farms.

The plantations found necessary or convenient to the establishment of the pueblos will be Crown property ; but they shall be assessed at a fair valuation and paid for at the first smelting, out of the share of gold, which shall belong to the Indians. The plantations must then be parcelled out in plots, and one of these be assigned to the head of each family, until such a time as he shall be able to reduce to a state of cultivation the land which shall be allotted to him in fee simple. The Cacique must take charge of the cattle on these plantations, to use them in the manner hereinafter explained. If possible, each pueblo should have ten or twelve mares, fifty cows, and one hundred sows. All these animals should at first remain common property, and be fed at public expense until the Indians shall have learned and grown accustomed to own and care for some of their own. There must be in each pueblo a butcher, who shall distribute to each family two pounds of meat whenever the husband will be at home, and not at work in the mines, and one pound, when he will be absent. If a family requires more meat it must procure it with its own industry, as it must also provide for itself, on abstinence days, when eating fleshmeat is forbidden. The Caci-

que must be given eight pounds of meat daily, and he must see that the wives of those who work in the mines make their own and their husband's bread, prepare chili, corn and all other necessary things, which must be sent, free of charge, to the mines on the mares mentioned above. There must be in each mine a butcher, and each workman must be given one pound and a half or two pounds of meat a day; and, as in Hispaniola fish is not abundant, dispensation should be obtained for eating fleshmeat on some of the days of Lent and on some other days of abstinence. In order that the laborers be provided with meat, some of the cattle, which are common property, should be driven to the mines for their slaughter houses, and if a sufficient supply of them is not at hand, others must be bought and paid for on the first smelting-day following.

All the gold mined must be consigned into the hands of the foreman every evening, as has been done heretofore, and when smelting-day shall have come, (and there must be one every two months, unless His Majesty's officers should ordain otherwise) said foreman, the Cacique, and the administrator together must take it to the smeltery and see that every thing be done

honestly. The gold must then be divided in three parts, one of which shall go to the king, and the other two to the Caciques and to the Indians to pay for the plantations and cattle that were bought for the pueblo and to meet all expenses made in common. The remainder must be divided into equal shares among the heads of families, the Cacique counting as six, and the foreman as two. With his share of gold mined each laborer must provide his own tools, which shall remain his own property. But in order that said tools be properly looked after, an account of them must be kept in writing. If the whole amount shall not thus have been disposed of, the Clerigo and administrator shall buy for the laborers clothing, and a dozen chickens and a cock, and what other things shall be thought necessary to his family; and in order that care be taken of these personal articles, a record shall be kept of them also. If a balance should yet remain in favor of the laborer, it shall be given in trust to some honest person, whose name, and the amount received shall go on record, in the manner that the Clerigo and administrator shall deem best, in order that the trustee may be properly summoned and made to disburse it, whenever he shall be called upon to do so.

Twelve Spaniards, professional miners, must be employed to prospect for and to discover new mines. Half of their salaries shall be paid by the King, and the other half by the Indians' common fund. As soon as a new mine shall have been discovered, it must be turned over to the Indians to be worked, and then the Spanish miners must proceed to discover other mines, leaving behind none of their servants or Spanish settlers, in order that the Indians may not be robbed of their gold or illtreated. And whatever gold the Spanish miners may find in the discharge of their duties shall be turned over to the proper authorities to be divided between the King and the Indians. Very severe penalties must be decreed against the violators of this rule."

I have said that the foregoing document was drafted by Las Casas. But the influence of the Spanish-American settlers, who were then pleading at court for their selfish interests, had its bad effects. The Protector of the Indians, far from advising it, protested against the enforced labor of the natives in the mines. He knew full well that it would open a door to the practices of those abuses, which had already caused the death of hundreds of thousands

of the helpless aborigines. All the clauses relating to the labor of the mines were the work of the royal councillors. The influence of the Spanish settlers went farther. The monks of St. Jerome were given a second memorial or set of instructions, which were to be the guide of their conduct in America, in case that the instructions contained in the first memorial should be found impracticable. The second memorial was made up of amendments to the laws enacted four years before by king Ferdinand for the government of the Indies.

These amendments were radical and all in favor of the Indians, but did not abolish the system of *Repartimientos* which was real slavery. And as long as the execution of these laws remained necessarily in the hands of the slaveowners, who were separated from the central government of Madrid by six thousand miles of water, they would, Las Casas knew it, prove ineffective and useless. Fortunately for the Indians, Ximenez enacted at the same time another decree, which has become perhaps the best known, as it proved the most beneficial of all the Spanish state papers concerning the protection of the American race. It ultimately proved their salvation. It was addressed to Las Casas and must be given in full.

Chapter XI.

Las Casas is made Official Protector of the Indians and Returns to America.

"TO Bartolomé de Las Casas, Clerigo, a native of Seville and a resident of Cuba in the Indies, *the King and the Queen.*"

"Inasmuch as we have been informed that you have resided for a long time in those countries, and that hence you are by experience familiar with their affairs, especially those wherein the welfare of the Indians is concerned, and inasmuch as you, by contact with them, have become well acquainted with their customs and manner of living, and whereas we know that you are zealous in the service of God and our own, which makes us hope that you will comply carefully and diligently with our commands and the duties of the charge we hereby give you, and that you will work for the welfare of the souls and bodies of the Spaniards as well as of the Indians; therefore, by these presents we command that you go to the Indies, to Hispaniola, to Cuba, to Porto Rico, to Jamaica and to the

Continent, and that you advise, counsel and inform the devout Fathers of St. Jerome, whom we send to reform the Indies, and all other persons, who may coöperate with them, about all things concerning the liberty, humane treatment and salvation of the souls and bodies of said Indians of the afore mentioned Islands and Continent, and that you thence write to us, that you inform us, and that you come to inform us about everything done in said Islands; and in order that you may do everything in a proper manner for the service of Our Lord and our own in the performance of the duties of your office, we hereby give you unreservedly all powers directly or indirectly connected or annexed, ordinarily or extraordinarily necessary to the exercise of your office. And we hereby command our admiral and the judges of the courts of appeal and all other judges in said Islands and Continent, that they respect and cause to be respected this power which we hereby give you, and that they observe and cause to be observed the spirit and the letter of this decree under penalty of our displeasure, and a fine of ten thousand maravedies for each offense. Given in Madrid the 17th day of September 1516.

F., the Cardinal.

Adrian, the Ambassador."

These were very indefinite powers; but their very latitude furnished Las Casas with a weapon wherewith to check the excesses of the Spaniards against the Indians. The white man in America will hereafter know that a man, who can neither be intimidated or bribed, keeps an eye on their conduct and is ready to denounce him to his sovereigns. By another decree Las Casas was declared Universal Procurator and Protector of all the Indians in America, and a salary was assigned to him of one hundred dollars a year, "which," says he, "in those days was not inconsiderable, as *that Hell of Peru* with its multitude of quintals of gold had not yet been discovered."

Zuazo had also received his credentials, and the judge, the monks and the Clerigo were ready to sail for Hispaniola to reform the Indies. But the Protector of the Indians had already lost confidence in the three religious, and taking leave of Ximenez, he said: "Señor, I wish to be free from any scruple of conscience, and as I am now in your presence, whom, my office requires, I should keep well informed, I speak. Your most Reverend Lordship must know that these monks of St. Jerome, to whose hands you have confided the des-

tinies of an infinite number of souls in those parts, will do no good, but much harm." He explained how they were leaving Spain already prejudiced against the Indians, whom they were sent to ransom and protect, and biased in favor of the Spaniards, whose crimes they were sent to punish. The Cardinal answered: "Well then, whom else shall we trust? You are going with them; look after everything yourself." Las Casas and the monks sailed on different ships from San Lucar the eleventh of September 1516 and safely reached Porto Rico together, where they were all detained four or five days. While in port the Protector of the Indians visited the monks and begged them to allow him to travel on their ship to Hispaniola, inasmuch as his own vessel would be detained a fortnight in Porto Rico to unload. The permission was refused.

Las Casas began actively to perform the duties of his office in Porto Rico itself. One John Bono, a shipmaster, had just arrived in port with a ship load of slaves, whom he had kidnapped in Trinidad in the following manner. With sixty marauders, like himself, he had appeared before that Island; and as the Indians gathered on the shore in large numbers, to prevent,

as best they could, a landing, he assured them that his and his companions' intentions were peaceful and that they had come to make a settlement in their midst. The Indians believed him, fed his people, and treated them as brothers. Bono cajoled the Indians into believing that the white men wished to live all in the same house; and the Indians set to work to build it as capacious as desired. In a few days the building was nearly completed and Bono invited the natives to come and see it. Some four hundred of them, naked and unarmed had entered the enclosure, when the Spaniards, at a given signal, swords in hand, surrounded the building, and Bono himself announced to the bewildered crowd, that they must either surrender or be cut to pieces. Some attempted to resist, others to flee, and in a few minutes the floor was strewn with the wounded, the dying, and the dead. One hundred and eighty were manacled and placed aboard the ship. And still the cargo was not yet complete. One hundred Indians had fortified themselves in a house of their own, and were ready to defend themselves. Summoned to surrender, they refused; the building was then set on fire by the Spaniards, and the one hundred human beings cremated. Bono,

who himself detailed to Las Casas this act of vandalism, when asked what had prompted him to such inhuman cruelty, answered that he had been instructed by the Oidores (judges of the supreme court) in Hispaniola to capture the Indians peacefully, if he could, but, with sword in hand, if necessary. Las Casas lost no time in informing the monks of what had happened. But the one hundred and eighty Indians, who had been sold into slavery, were not set free, neither was Bono or the Oidores ever punished for their crime.

The Clerigo was taking a stroll on the streets of San Juan de Porto Rico, when he heard the moans and the cries of an Indian, who, tied to a post, was being unmercyfully whipped by a visitador, i. e. an inspector of Repartimientos, because the wretch had attempted to run away from his master, and had disobeyed him. The priest stepped to the brutish visitador and reprimanded him for his cruelty. The scourging was suspended, but no sooner had Las Casas disappeared, than the fiend resumed the flagellation of the Indian. This too was detailed by Las Casas to the monks; but no good came of it.

The reader however must not imagine that the mission undertaken by the Fathers

was an easy one. The great Cardinal Ximenez very probably had not fully realized all the difficulties of the undertaking, and, not unlikely, the Protector of the Indians himself would have failed to reform the Indies had the task been entrusted to him with the same powers that were conferred on the three monks of St. Jerome. Very few instances are recorded in history of slavery having been effectually abolished in any country, by royal, presidential, or other decrees, without bloodshed and war. There is however no evidence that the three monks made any serious effort to carry out the first of the two sets of instructions, which had been given them as a guide of their conduct in the fulfilment of their American mission. They arrived at the seat of the colonial government, San Domingo, thirteen days before Las Casas. The object of their coming was well known there, and the colonial officers and the judges received them in a manner befitting the representatives of the Kings. No time was lost in representing to them that if the Repartimientos were abolished, and the Indians set free, the colonies would be destroyed; and that, without enforced labor, the Indians could never be civilized or christianized, and that they could not

support themselves side by side with the white men. The Fathers lent a willing ear to these arguments, and even before the arrival of their official advisor, if not convinced, were persuaded into believing that it was impossible to abolish the Repartimientos. Las Casas found them far from disposed to take immediate steps to emancipate his protegées. True, the Repartimientos belonging to absentee landlords, like Fonseca, Conchillos etc., were undone, but Las Casas never succeeded in inducing the Fathers to deprive the colonial officers, the judges, the governor, the treasurer, etc. of their Indians. He represented to them daily how the Indians perished under the system, he detailed to them the horrors of the kidnapping expeditions, how the mines might as well be called places of execution, how the Spaniards oppressed, starved and murdered the Indians. But all in vain. The Fathers were slow, and could not be aroused to action.

The impetuous Clerigo wished to see the ax fall at once at the root of the evil; the monks reflected and temporized. It was no unusual occurrence to see the Protector of the Indians appear before the Fathers in the company of some well meaning man or woman, who would corroborate his state-

ments about the illtreatment of the Indians by the white men, or tell new tales of cruelties, of which they had been eye witnesses. One day a brother priest, whose charge was at one of the mines fifteen or sixteen miles from San Domingo, came to report to the Protector of the Indians how the native laborers were there abused. He testified, that he had seen them sick from overwork, lying on the neighboring hills, or in the fields, covered with flies, and that nobody concerned himself enough about them, to give them food or nourishment, and that the owners of the Repartimientos allowed them thus to die. Hearing which, Las Casas took him by the hand and led him to the monks. These listened impassively to the harrowing rehearsal of the narrative; they first expressed themselves as if in doubt of the veracity of the priest, and ended by palliating and excusing the cruelty of the tyrants. The clergyman, a humane gentleman, who had come to inform Las Casas out of pure compassion for the Indians, because he had heard that he was their Procurator, made the following answer: "Do you know, Reverend Fathers, that I begin to surmise that you will do no more good to these wretched creatures than the governors who preceded you?" Say-

ing which he departed, leaving the three monks rather sad and dazed.

Las Casas left nobody in doubt as to his mission in San Domingo. He insisted that the three commissioners (they were not exactly governors) should set free without delay the slaves belonging to the judges, officers and other government employees. He preached in church, in the streets, and so to say from the house tops, that the Repartimientos must be abolished and all the Indians set free. Thus, while he more and more became the idol of the surviving natives of Hispaniola, he attracted daily more and more the shafts poisoned by hatred and a desire of revenge, which the Spanish settlers aimed at him. His life was no longer safe, (so, at least, he thought,) in his own house, and on the warning and at the invitation of the Dominican Fathers, he went to reside in their convent. Meanwhile Zuazo, the judge *de residentia*, had also arrived in Hispaniola. After presenting his credentials, he soon began to perform the important duties of his office. The Oidores, or judges of the court of appeal, were summoned to answer to charges for malfeasance in office. Las Casas, as Protector of the Indians, had a right to appear as prosecuting attorney.

Calling into service all his lawyer's training and natural talents and all his priestly zeal, he formulated a terrible indictment, accusing the Oficiales of murder and theft, in so far as they had allowed, connived at, and participated in enlisting and arming expeditionary forces to kidnap the Indians of the Bahama Archipelago, whereby thousands of homicides had been committed, and numberless men, women, and children had been deprived of their liberty.

Las Casas tells us himself that it was the general opinion among those who were versed in criminal prosecutions, that the judges would be condemned to death, as they fully deserved. But he does not tell us how the trial ended, remarking however, that the judges are seldom condemned to death, and if they are, the sentences are not often executed.

The zeal of the Protector of the Indians in discharging the duties of his office, disturbed the equanimity of the three monks, because the prosecution of the judges emphasized their obligation to declare the Indians free. To shift responsibility, while disregarding the counsels of their official advisor, the three commissioners thought proper to ask the opinions of the judges, of the Franciscan and Dominican Fathers, as

to the advisability of abolishing the system of Repartimientos, and of carrying out the first set of instructions they had brought from Spain. They knew in advance what the answer of the judges and of the Franciscans would be. But the Dominicans stood, as usual, uncompromisingly for the liberty of the Indians in a written thesis, which they presented to the commissioners signed by all the jurists and theologians of their community. The commissioners gave it slight consideration.

They had now resided in Hispaniola six months, and their inactivity had convinced Las Casas that they would accomplish nothing of importance in behalf of the Indians. But just then the following episode came to his knowledge and left no doubt in his mind as to the course to be pursued.

Some of the commissioners' relatives had come from Spain and had been sent by them to Cuba, with letters to Velasquez, asking him to take them under his patronage, which, under the circumstances, meant to give them the best Repartimiento of Indians to be found.

"They dared not keep them in Hispaniola," Las Casas tell us, "because the Clerigo was there, who, they knew it, would

publicly denounce the crime, if the relatives of those, who had been sent to free the Indians, would be allowed and helped to enrich themselves with their labor."

The friends of the latter and of their Protector, namely the Dominicans and judge Zuazo were consulted and all agreed that the Clerigo should return to Spain and report to Ximenez the state of affairs. Zuazo was selected to notify the commissioners that their official advisor was about to sail for Europe.

"Don't let him go," said they on hearing the news; "he is a torch, that will set every thing on fire."

"But Fathers," answered Zuazo, "who will dare stop him? He is a clergyman, and moreover has in his possession a royal decree authorizing him to go and inform the Kings, whenever he sees fit, as this is one of the duties of his office."

The following day the Clerigo himself went to pay a visit to the commissioners.

"What is this, that we hear about your going to Castile?" remarked one of them. Las Casas cooly answered: "Yes, I would like to go and attend to some business pertaining to my office." The subject of conversation was then changed.

Chapter XII.

Las Casas' Second Trip to Spain in behalf of the Indians.

ARMED with testimonials from the Dominicans and from the French Franciscans as to his zeal, efforts and work in behalf of the Indians, Las Casas sailed some time in May, and fifty days after stood by the bedside of the great Cardinal Ximenez, who was already ill of the sickness that proved his last. The dying statesman gently complained with the Protector of the Indians for not having written to inform him how American affairs were progressing. From which the Clerigo learned, for the first time, that his letters from the Indies, which he had mailed regularly on every returning ship, had been intercepted, while those of the three commissioners, in which complaints and accusations were lodged against him, had reached their destination. He did not succeed, however, in locating the guilty parties.

The monks of St. Jerome in Hispaniola lost no time in deputizing one of themselves to go to Spain to represent and de-

fend them at court. The choice fell on Bernardino de Manzanedo. But Ximenez died a few days after, without seeing his efforts in behalf of the American Indians bear any fruit.

Charles V. was expected in Spain for some time past, but nobody seemed to know just when he would arrive. Las Casas decided to wait in Valladolid until September, and if by that time an opportunity was not afforded him of interviewing the young Monarch in Spain, he would go to Flanders to see him there. Father Reginaldo Montesino was a brother of that Antonio Montesino, with whom we are already acquainted, and like him a Dominican. A learned and eloquent preacher, he was a man of great influence, who offered, with the permission of his superiors, to accompany the Clerigo and to give him whatever assistance he could, during the journey and while in the Low Countries. The two friends were not, however, long together in Valladolid, when news reached the city that the King had landed on Spanish soil, and that, in a few days, he would arrive in Valladolid itself. Meanwhile they were not idle. Las Casas and Reginaldo were one day in conversation with an exmember of the Bureau of Indian affairs, who remarked

to the two clergymen that, in his opinion, the American Indian was too low in the scale of humanity to be taught and to learn and practice the Christian religion. Montesino promptly informed him that to say the like was heresy. The friar's boldness irritated the royal counselor, and a dispute followed. This pretented incapacity of the Indians to learn and understand the Christian religion had been from the beginning a powerful weapon in the hands of their enemies to keep them in bondage, and the two clergymen thought that it ought to be blunted if it was not in their power to break it. Reginaldo wrote therefore to Father Hurtado, prior of the monastery of St. Stephen in Salamanca, who was prominent in his Order, not only as a profound theologian, but as a saintly man, and informed him, that the pernicious error, about the American Indians not being able to learn and understand the Christian religion, was held by some of the courtiers, and requested him to call together the theological faculty of that University to discuss and decide the question. It was done, and the conclusions arrived at were shortly after sent to Montesino and Las Casas properly signed and authenticated. The last conclusion recited that the death penalty by

fire should be inflicted on those, who were imbued with that error and *pertinaciously* defended it, as was done in the case of heretics. The enslavement of men except of criminals, lunatics, idiots, and the like, is undefensible in the light of the Gospel, unless it be assumed that the individuals thus enslaved are not really human beings, but mere brutes, outwardly resembling men. To appreciate the value of that document in the hands of Las Casas to protect the Indians against the tyranny of those who called themselves Christians, we must call to mind the fact that a decision on a point of faith or morals by a university such as that of Salamanca at the beginning of the XVI. century had almost the same effect and bearing that a decree from a Roman Congregation has at the present time. It usually settled the point in dispute. Henceforth the Protector of the Indians will be able to fling that decision in the face of his adversaries and say: The American Indians are men endowed with reason, children, like the white men, of the same Father, who is in heaven, and capable of being christianized; they were free, and no Christian has the right to enslave them.

"These principles are self-evident to us of the XIX. century, but they were not so

clear to our ancestors of the XV. and XVI. centuries." So say the apologists of the early American settlers. Their argument, it seems to me, has little force. The gospel was at least as well understood then as it is now, and the works of St. Thomas Aquinas were widely taught and better known to the clergy of 1517 than they are to the clergy of 1900. Christian faith is, if you wish, the foundation of Christian morals; without the former the latter cannot exist. But Christian faith is sometimes found with the deepest moral depravity in the same individual. This is Catholic doctrine and a lesson that history has taught for the past eighteen hundred years.

Charles V. brought to Spain his own state and court officers. There was a grand chancellor or head of the royal imperial cabinet, who filled the office of the modern English premier, to whom he entrusted the government of Spain and its American dependencies. The high chancellor was one Mosior or Lord de Laxao and the secretary of state one Mosior de Xevier. Francisco de Los Cobos, who had been an employee of secretary Conchillo's office, on the death of king Ferdinand, had gone to Flanders to solicit a reappointment and succeeded in gaining the confidence of de

Xevres. As soon as his former master Conchillo was rudely set aside, he was himself appointed colonial secretary of the Indies. These are the men with whom Las Casas will have henceforth to deal. Two of them were foreigners and the last named a Spaniard. Through Adrian, the heretofore ambassador, he found easy access to the Flemish high chancellor. As if to give an account of himself, he produced, on the occasion of his first visit, the decree appointing him procurator and protector of the Indians, together with the testimonials brought from America from the Dominicans and the French Franciscan Fathers. Not knowing Spanish, the chancellor first perused the letter of the Franciscans, who had written in Latin. As chance would have it, among the signatures he noticed that of a former acquaintance of his. He would have probably given little attention to a paper from Spaniards recommending another Spaniard, but the testimonial from his old friend predisposed him to listen favorably to Las Casas. It did not take the old Dutch chancellor long to discover the metal that the Clerigo was made of, and as he needed to become familiar with American affairs, finding this frank outspoken American priest thoroughly conversant with

them, he choose him in the course of time as his confidential informant. Las Casas could go and see him and talk to the old gentleman whenever he wished. There was no need of making his obeisance to de Xevres, de Laxao or Francisco de Los Cobos. He and the old chancellor understood each other well, although their conversation had to be carried on in Latin.

Meanwhile secretary Conchillo and Fonseca left not a stone unturned to have themselves reappointed members of the bureau for Indian affairs. But they did not succeed, and Las Casas knew why. They went so far as to attempt to exercise their former office without having been reappointed by the new administration. One day Conchillo provided himself with a bundle of papers concerning America and presenting himself to the chancellor, requested him to affix his signature to them. "Get you out of here," thundered the Dutchman in angry tones, "it was you and the bishop, who ruined the Indies." Conchillo understood that his services were no longer required at court, and withdrew to his estate at Toledo. But Fonseca, whose ecclesiastical dignity yielded only to that of the archbishops of Toledo and Seville, fared better, and was later readmitted as a

member of the royal council or bureau of Indian affairs. Las Casas' favor with the grand chancellor grew apace with the downfall of his enemies. Petitions, denunciations of each others, memorials, complaints against Las Casas himself, etc. on the part of the American settlers flooded the offices of the high chancellor. They were invariably referred to the Clerigo, who translated them into Latin, adding notes of his own, and giving his views as to what should be done. These services, given gratuitously, were highly appreciated; as in a comparatively short time they enabled the foreign premier to familiarize himself with the administration of the far-away transatlantic colonies. The chancellor thought it advisable to speak to the young monarch about the American priest and lawyer, who, by his experience, uprightness, disinterestedness and well poised judgment greatly assisted him in dispatching the business of the American possessions. Thereupon Charles V. appointed the chancellor and Las Casas a committee to draft a body of laws intended to do even-handed justice to the colonists and to the Indians alike. That same day the Clerigo was a guest, with many others, of the chancellor, who, as they were going in to din-

ner, took the priest aside and said to him: "Rex dominus noster jubet quod vos et ego ponamus remedia Indiis" (it is the command of His Majesty the king that you and I reform the Indies.) "Faciatis vestra memorabilia." (Write your memorial.) Las Casas' answer was: "Paratissimus sum et libentissime faciam quae rex et vestra dominatio jubent." (I am ready and will willingly do what the king and your excellency require of me.)

After relating this episode, the Protector of the Indians remarks pathetically: "This was the second time that God seemed to place the salvation and the liberty of the Indians in the hands of the Clerigo. But these bright prospects would vanish of a sudden one way or another, as will be seen later. If this happened on account of the sins of the Spaniards or of the Indians, or of both, only judgement day shall reveal."

In 1502, while sailing by Cuba, Christopher Columbus had remarked, pointing in the direction of Mexico, and within hearing of one of his ship's boys, that he expected to discover more extensive territory there, than any yet discovered. That ship's boy in 1517 had grown to be the pilot of a ship, chartered by one Hernandez, for no better purpose than kidnapping Indians wherever

he and his associates could find them. The pilot chanced to speak to the captain of the remark made by Columbus fifteen years before. Thereupon Hernandez changed his plans, and having obtained a promise from Diego Velasquez, (under whose hospices the expedition was made ready,) that, should he discover new lands, he would be made lieutenant governor thereof, loaded on his ship cattle, horses, hogs, etc., and every thing necessary to a new settlement, taking it as a foregone conclusion that Columbus' prophesy would be fulfilled. They sailed west, and first discovered the island of Cazumel, and then the mainland of Yucatan, landing at Cape Catoche. Thence they discovered the Indian town of Campeche, where they were treated hospitably by the natives. Next they visited Champoton, were a like reception was given them at first. But seeing that their bearded visitors tarried in their country longer than it suited them, the Indians invited them to leave. A battle ensued, the outcome of which was that, though many of the natives were killed, the Spaniards were beaten back to their ships, carrying with them many wounded, and leaving behind quite a number of dead. The arrows of the Yucatanese had inflicted

on Hernandez himself, (who was known in America as one of the best Indian fighters) not less than thirty wounds, of which he died some months after. When the discovery of a country was made, rich in gold, with large towns having regular streets, public squares, gardens, statues, monuments and houses made of stone, brick and mortar, the inhabitants whereof were fully clothed with well woven cotton garments, the like of which had not yet been seen in America, Velasquez broke faith with Hernandez, and instead of appointing him lieutenant governor of the country, hastened to raise a larger and a better equipped expedition to take possession of Yucatan, and appointed, as its captain general, his old favorite countryman, Juan de Grijalva. Hernandez, whose wounds confined him to his bed, wrote to Las Casas, whom he considered his friend, bitterly complaining of Velasquez, and asking him to use his good offices with the king, to have his wrongs redressed. The Clerigo received the letter in Zaragoza, but did not tell us what steps he took, if any in behalf of his friend, the discoverer of Mexico. Hernandez died without revisiting his native country.

Meanwhile Juan de Grijalva, with two hundred followers, had explored the coast

of Mexico, from Cape Catoche as far north as Vera Cruz, and had returned to Santiago de Cuba, loaded with gold, to report to Diego Velasquez. The news of the discovery of Mexico was already known in Spain; but nobody attached much importance to it, as it was not even known if it was an island or terra firma. At this time delegation after delegation of Americo-Spanish settlers swarmed around the royal palaces, some to ask for new grants of Indians or lands, others to have themselves confirmed in the offices, on which they had fattened under the old administration; and everybody sharpened his wits to devise new plans and schemes, whereby to ingratiate himself to the Flemish noblemen, who composed the court. One of these schemes was the following. It was suggested to one of the Dutch magnates, who answered to the title of admiral of Flanders, that he might obtain from his majesty, as a grant or gift, the newly discovered regions, which, in fact, comprised nothing less than the present territory of the Republic of Mexico, which had then perhaps as many inhabitants as it has now. To properly govern Yucatan and Mexico, the admiral of Flanders was told, he should also have himself appointed governor of Cuba, which,

owing to its geographical position, would answer very well as a base of supply in the conquest and settlement of the new country. The wealthy Flemish gentleman, whose idea of America went no farther than to know that it was a country far away from Europe, planted in the midst of the limitless Atlantic Ocean, and that it was inhabited by a race of men different from the Europeans and not nearly as white as the Dutch, thought it worth while to look into the business, attracted perhaps more by the novelty of the thing, than by anything else. As Las Casas was then in great favor with the great chancellor, and therefore a very important personage, who knew more about the Indies than any one else, the admiral thought it advisable to invite him to a dinner, to which a large number of his Flemish friends had also been invited. The Clerigo was treated with great consideration, was toasted, and in a long after dinner talk was made to give the Flemish gentlemen more knowledge about the transatlantic Spanish possessions, than they ever had before. The admiral of Flanders, thought that Mexico, with the governorship of Cuba thrown in for good measure, was worth having. He asked for it, and young Charles V. granted it with the same ease, as if the use of a common

for the pasturing of the nobleman's cattle had been asked. The admiral then wrote to Flanders, and in a few months there arrived in the port of San Lucar five shiploads of Dutch laborers, who were ready to go to Mexico and settle it. That republic would perhaps be now made up of Flemish-Americans instead of Spanish-Americans, had not Las Casas interfered. But he did. He thought it best to let his friend Diego Columbus know what was being done, who, in virtue of the vice-royalty granted his father on all the lands discovered by him, was ex officio governor of Cuba. Diego lodged a complaint with the king, and the justice of his claim having been recognized, the grant of Mexico to the admiral of Flanders was declared null and void; and the Dutch laborers, those at least whom the hot climate of southern Spain had not killed, were sent back to the Low Countries.

About this time, that is towards the end of 1517 or the beginning of 1518, Las Casas made the acquaintance of Magellan, the first circumnavigator of the world. He had come from Portugal, like Columbus surreptitiously, or as a fugitive from justice, and like Columbus he claimed to know a way of going to the land of spices

by a route different from the one followed by the Portuguese, through a strait known only to himself. He exhibited in the office of the grand chancellor, and in the presence of the Clerigo one of those geographical globes, which, since the discovery of America, and the turning of Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese, and their landing in Brazil, were no longer uncommon. On it the continent of America was carefully delineated, as far as it was then known, but the strait, to which he gave his name, was carefully left out. However, he pointed out to the chancellor and to the bystanders where it should be.

The first American priest was no mean mariner himself. On the contrary he was one of the few then living in Spain or elsewhere, who could sail from a European port and steer a ship by the shortest route to Florida, Cuba, Panama, Brazil, La Plata, etc., and withall he was not bashful about asking questions.

"What route do you intend to follow, Mr. Magellan?" asked the Clerigo.

"I'll first make Cape Santa Maria (La Plata River) and coast thence southward until I find the strait," replied the Portuguese.

Las Casas: "And if you don't find it?"

Magellan: "I'll get there, if I have to follow the Portuguese route."

Magellan was accompanied by one Luis Faleiro, who pretended to be a great astronomer. But it was whispered later among the Portuguese, that he had entered into partnership with a devil, whence he got his geographical secret, and that of astronomy he knew nothing. The letters of Hernandez, his relations with the admiral of Flanders and with Magellan were incidental episodes in the life of Las Casas, while he was at court. His all absorbing business was to work and to plead for his Indians. The first American priest was at all time a pious man and his rule of life was always to seek divine assistance before engaging in any important undertaking. All his writings show him to have been also a man of great and abiding faith. Before beginning to write the body of laws intended to reform the Indies (this is his own expression) at the invitation of Charles V. and his high chancellor, we find the first American priest going from one to another monastery and to the convents and to all the pious people of his acquaintance, to beg for prayers, that God might enlighten him to do what was best for the salvation, material and spiritual, of his many millions

of children in America. His present task however was not a very difficult one. He did little more than copy the memorial he had written for cardinal Ximenez, to put which into execution the three monks of St. Jerome had been sent to Hispaniola. Of course the objectionable ministerial interpolations were left out. Las Casas however made two new and very important recommendations, which have become very famous in the annals of the early history of America.

The first recited that, inasmuch as the islands of Hispaniola, Cuba, Porto Rico and Jamaica had been wellnigh depopulated of their aboriginal inhabitants, Spanish immigrants, drawn from the agricultural classes, should be imported to repeople them.

The second recommendation was that, inasmuch as the Spanish settlers were to be deprived of their Repartimientos of Indians, each of them should be allowed to import from Spain a dozen negro slaves, to enable them to continue their planting and mining operations.

A word must be said here about this recommendation, which has caused so much discussion among historians and sociologists during the last and the present century.

We shall see how it was carried out and how four thousand African slaves were imported to America. The question, which has been much debated, is: Was Las Casas responsible for the introduction of Negro slavery in America?

All modern historians now agree that he was not. There were African slaves in the Indies before the Protector of the Indians ever made his famous recommendation to Charles V.

1st. Las Casas himself in the memorial, in which he recommends the importation of Negroes to replace the American Indians, mentions the fact that: "On certain farms in Hispaniola, Cuba, etc., belonging to the kings, there were some Negro slaves, although few," and he recommends that they be turned over to the immigrant Spanish laborers, who were to be imported in those islands.

2d. In the will of Diego Columbus, the brother of Christopher, (dated the 22d of February 1515) we find a legacy of one hundred dollars to a Negro boy, the son of a negress slave named Barbola.

3rd. Las Casas speaking of John Bono (good) mentioned above, jocularly remarks that his name Bono fitted him about as well as that of John Blanco (white) fitted a cer-

tain runaway Negro, who had become a famous pirate and kidnapper of Indians, previous to the year 1516.

4th. In a letter of king Ferdinand to Esteban Pasamonte, dated the 4th of April 1514, it is said: "Slave Negro women will be provided for (Hispaniola) to be given in marriage to the Negro men, who are there already, in order to lessen the danger of a rebellion on their part." If there existed already some fear of a Negro uprising, they must have been comparatively numerous.

5th. In 1510 Diego de Nicuesa carried to Hispaniola for the Spanish government thirtysix Negro slaves.

6th. In the year 1505 the same government sent to Nicolas Ovando seventeen Negro slaves to be employed in a copper mine.

7th. As early as 1501 permission was given to the same Nicolas Ovando to bring from Spain to Hispaniola Negro slaves.

But was not Las Casas illogical in combatting unrelentlessly the enslavement of the American Indians while recommending and encouraging African slavery?

Not necessarily. Slavery existed in Spain at the end of the XV. and at the beginning of the XVI. centuries, and it was recognized by the laws of the land. It was not in Las

Casas' power, neither was it his duty, as Protector of the Indians, to endeavor to have it abolished. The slavery of the weak-bodied and indolent American natives of the West Indies was fatal to them, and their enforced labor had already reduced their numbers at least seventy-five per cent. On the contrary African slaves prospered and multiplied in the sunny climes of Hispaniola, Cuba, Porto Rico and Jamaica, where, as Las Casas facetiously remarks in his *Historia de las Indias*, "a Negro was seldom known to die, unless he was hung." Of two evils he choose the least. If slavery must exist in America, Las Casas thought, let it be of the Negroes, who were already slaves, and could survive it, instead of the Indians, who were deprived unjustly of their liberty, and succumbed to it. The severest moralist of today could scarcely condemn this mode of reasoning. But the Protector of the Indians would not accept the apology for himself, when, in maturer years, and after having studied, under the guidance of the Dominicans, the subject of slavery more thoroughly, he acknowledged to posterity his error in the following passage of his *Historia de las Indias.* (Book 3rd, chapter 101.) "This advise that permission be given to import Negro

slaves was first given by the Clerigo Casas, who did not then know that the Portuguese capture and enslave them unjustly. After he became aware of the fact, he would not give that advice for the whole world; and ever since he has believed that it is as unjust to enslave Negroes, as it is to enslave Indians, and for the same reasons." And again, in the 128th chapter of the same work, he renews the open confession. "Of that advice which the Clerigo then gave, he repented not a little, and accused himself of thoughtlessness in later years, because he understood then, how the slavery of Negroes is as unjust as that of the Indians. He understood also how the remedy proposed of importing Negroes to free the Indians was unjust; and although he then supposed the former to have been justly enslaved, still he is not certain that his ignorance and his good intention will excuse him before the judgement seat of God."

Let us conclude. If Las Casas erred, he erred with some of the foremost theologians and jurists of his time, as Cardinal Ximenez and Cardinal Adrian (afterwards Pope) who signed and approved his first recommendation for the importation of Negroes in America. If he erred, he erred on the

side of humanity. And the open confession of his error in maturer years, when deeper studies had undeceived him, endeared him more to posterity, I think, than if he had not erred at all.

Leave was granted by Charles V. for the importation of four thousand Negroes; granting the exclusive right to the traffic to one of his Dutch courtiers, who sold it to Genoese merchants. These, in their turn, bought them from the Portuguese, and sold them to the Spanish settlers in America at exorbitant profits. Thus Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Flanders co-operated in establishing in the new world the curse of African slavery, and the commerce in human flesh. Not many years after, England and France became their partners.

The court had not yet left Valladolid for Zaragoza, when it was whispered around that the Archbishop of Burgos and his brother, by the payment to the king or to Monsieur de Xevres, of sixteen thousand ducats, had been reinstated in their offices. Las Casas leaves us in doubt if this was true or not, and suggests that perhaps it was owing to the prominence of their family, and to their having held those positions so long under the former administration, that it was thought best to reinstate

them. Hereafter the Protector of the Indians will have to face again the greedy and crafty Juan Fonseca.

On their way from Valladolid to Zaragoza the king and his court made a halt in Aranda de Duero, and, at a meeting of the council of state, the memorial of Las Casas was taken up for consideration. Fonseca opposed the sending of laborers to the West Indies on the plea that none could be gotten to go. "Twenty years ago I tried to send laborers to Hispaniola, and not twenty were found willing to go," said the archbishop. Thereupon the Clerigo pledged himself to gather three thousands of them, and to accompany them to America, provided that the inducements he himself had suggested should be offered to the emigrants, were carried out in good faith. He argued with Fonseca that conditions had changed. Between 1495 and 1502 the greatest punishment, that could be inflicted on a Spaniard, was to exile him to America; whereas ever since 1502 every Spanish settler in America considered it a great punishment to be expelled from the colonies and forced to return to Spain.

The principal inducements to be offered to the laborers were the following:

1. Each emigrant shall have his travelling expenses paid at the rate of half a *Real* (six cents and a half) per day from his home to Seville.

2. While in Seville he shall be lodged in the *Casa de Contratacion* (offices and warehouses of the government's commercial agencies) free of charge, and he shall be given from eleven to thirteen Maravedies a day (between three and four cents a day of our American money) for his board.

3. Free passage to America.

4. Board and lodging, during one year, while employed in making his first crop.

5. After the first year, should the immigrant need further assistance to establish himself, it shall be given to him in the shape of a loan, to be repaid into the royal treasury at a time to be agreed upon.

6. The farms or plantations, which were then crown property, the Negro slaves thereon, and all apurtenances thereto, except the Indians, who were to be set free, were to be divided among the immigrants.

7. Agricultural implements were to be furnished free to each colonist.

8. As much land shall be given him, as he wished to cultivate.

9. If sick, he should be cared for at the expense of the state, the king paying for medicines and doctor's fees.

10. The towns or parishes, founded by the immigrants, shall exercise the *jus patronatus* over all ecclesiastical benefices established in said towns or parishes, in the sense, that appointments to vacancies were to be made by *concursus*, or competitive examination, to which however only the children or descendants of the immigrants were to be admitted.

Negotiations were pending in Aranda, when Las Casas fell sick, and they were temporarily suspended. But the Clerigo even while confined to his bed, was not idle. One day there came to visit him, in the name of the high chancellor, his Flemish chaplain with a bundle of papers containing an American petition, which, if granted, would have seriously infringed on the rights of Diego Columbus, the admiral, and, *de jure* at least, viceroy of all the Indies. The sick man was requested to state what he thought of it. Las Casas, though just then harrassed by a burning fever, got out of bed, and perusing the document, translated it from Spanish into Latin, giving at the same time his opinion as to what should be done.

Charles V. and his court departed from Aranda for Zaragoza and left the Clerigo behind. Las Casas, however, was not long

in recovering his usually robust health, and, as the Dutch grandees' gait was not fast, he overreached them before the end of their journey. Writing fourty-five years after, at the age of ninety, in the quiet cell of a Dominican monastery in Valladolid, the Protector of the Indians delighted in detailing to posterity how great an attachment the Flemish grand chancellor had contracted for the Clerigo. "Many times," says he (*Historia de Las Indias*, Book III. Chapter CIII.) "did the grand chancellor speak of the Clerigo during the journey, showing how deeply he felt for him in his sickness. 'I wonder, he would say, how Micer Bartolomé is doing?' And when, by the grace of God, the Clerigo succeeded in rejoining him at a certain stopping place, great was the joy of the grand chancellor in seeing him well again, and many were the complimentary things he said of him. As the Clerigo ascended the stairs, leading to his apartments, there met him Don Garcia de Padilla who said: 'Quick, quick, Father, go up, and see the grand chancellor, who is in tears for you, fearing that you might die.' "

The court had scarcely reached Zaragoza when Fonseca fell sick, and Las Casas' affairs had once more to be set aside for

three or four weeks. While patiently waiting, he received a letter from his friend, Reginaldo Montesino, telling him that a Franciscan Friar, by the name of Francisco de San Roman, had just arrived from the American colony on the mainland of South America, and that the Father assured him (Montesino) that during his stay on those coasts he had been an eye-witness to the slaughtering, by the swords of the Spaniards, of more than forty thousand Indians. The letter, of course, was translated into Latin for the benefit of the grand chancellor. It dismayed him, and Las Casas was prevailed upon to pay a visit to his lordship, who was convalescent. Having heard the letter read to him, Fonseca briefly remarked: "Give my regards to his Excellence, and say to him, that, as I have already told him, it will be well that we get that man out of those parts." Fonseca referred to Pedrarias de Davila, of whom more anon.

It was also during Fonseca's illness at Zaragoza that Las Casas one day met the wife of ex-secretary Conchillo in the royal palace. "Oh Father," she exclaimed on seeing him, "may God forgive you for having taken the bread out of my children's mouths." But a fitting reply to the insult

was ready. "May their blood be upon me and upon my kinsmen." The answer admitted of no further remarks. The silly woman, who dressed in silks, decked herself with jewels and lived in palaces, ventured to reproach the apostolic man for daring to protect the Indians, on whose blood she, her children, and her husband had fattened.

Fonseca recovered, and the grand chancellor was anxious to expedite the Clerigo's business. But God, in his unscrutable designs, thought proper once more to cast to the winds his servant's hopes, who after years of travel, waiting, pleading, begging and praying for his beloved Indians, was then about to touch the goal, of his heart's aspirations. One Saturday evening the first American priest was dining with the chancellor, when word was brought in, that the latter's nephew had died. The news so shocked the aged statesman, as to compel him to retire at once to his apartments. Next morning he felt worse, and by the following Tuesday was a corpse. "With the chancellor," wrote Las Casas, "seemed to have died also the last hope for the Indians." The bishop (Fonseca) shot up to the skies, and the Clerigo went down to the abysses. The archbishop of Burgos, once more at

the head of the bureau of Indian affairs, surrounded himself with men directly or indirectly interested in maintaining the statu quo in America; and Las Casas found the doors leading to the colonial offices shut against him.

One of the first acts of the new administration was to recall from America the three monks of St. Jerome. It will not be found amiss to give here the names of the three recluses, who, for two or three years, had the destinies of this western continent in their keeping. They were Alonzo, who had been prior of a monastery in Seville, Bernardino de Manzanedo, and Luis de Figueroa, who had been sent to watch the movements of Las Casas. After hanging around the royal palaces for some time, he retired to his monastery as soon as he saw the management of Indian affairs fall once more into the hands of Fonseca. Having been practically appointees of Las Casas, they had nothing to hope for from the archbishop of Burgos. Indeed the good religious, heartily sick of worldly affairs, welcomed their dismissal from office, and quietly retired to enjoy again the peace of their monastic cells.

The reader remembers, no doubt, how the Dominicans and the French Franciscans

had established convents in Cumana and in Chiribichi. They had begun their evangelical work in earnest, had gained the confidence of the Indians and made some converts. But the outrages, committed by Spanish marauders during their kidnapping expedition along the coast, scandalized the natives, and inclined them to think that all white men were bad, cruel and ferocious. Thus the self-sacrificing devotion of the Friars was made barren by the crimes of their countrymen. I have detailed somewhat at length the kidnapping expedition of Juan Bono to the Island of Trinidad. That had happened in 1516. About a year later another such unqualifiable act of barbarism took place on the same Island on a larger scale. The slaves thus captured were being sold at auction on the public square of San Domingo in Hispaniola in the presence of the two monks of St. Jerome, who had remained in America. Pedro de Cordova, the provincial of the Dominicans, having heard of it, rushed to the house of the commissioners, and, burning with indignation, bitterly reproached them for allowing that traffic in human flesh of the helpless Indians, whose only crime was overconfidence and overkindness to the white men. The public sale was

stopped, but the slaves were taken to the government offices and quietly disposed of to this or that miner or planter. The Island of Trinidad, and the pueblo, whence hundreds of men were thus stolen and sold into captivity, was almost in sight of Chiribichi. Pedro de Cordova, who saw the works of his brothers nullified by the crimes of the Spaniards, connived at and participated in by the highest royal offices in the colonies and tolerated by the very monks, who had been sent to America to free the Indians, wrote to Las Casas ; and, after having described the kidnapping and murdering raid and the sale of its surviving victims, said : "Sure as I am of the turn affairs are taking, I feel constrained to speak my mind plainly, regardless of consequences." The letter ended by asking his friend the Clerigo to beg the king to issue a decree forbidding the Spaniards from settling, or landing ships in the neighborhood of the Franciscan and Dominican Missions. One hundred leagues of coast should be reserved to the Friars, wherein they may, undisturbed by the blithing influence of the white man, attend to the conversion of the natives. If one hundred leagues could not be obtained, Las Casas was to ask for ten, and if these could not be gotten, he was to beg for

some small Islands fifteen or twenty leagues from the mainland, whose inhabitants could be formed into Christian communities, and where other Indians might find a shelter from the persecution of the Spaniards. The Protector of the Indians, who had greatly at heart the preservation of those Missions, and who had even seriously thought of going himself to Chiribichi to share the labors of the good Dominicans in the capacity of a secular priest, read the contents of Pedro de Cordova's letter to Fonseca and to his associate ministers. He was paid for his trouble with the following cynical answer of the archbishop: "Well, would I attend to the king's interest, if I should turn over to the Friars, without any compensation whatever, one hundred leagues of territory?" "The remark," wrote Las Casas, "was little worthy of a successor of the Apostles, who laid down their lives to do just what he was asked to do, and which he was strictly bound to do by the divine law under pain of eternal damnation."

The death of the high chancellor, and the consequent ascendency of Fonseca checked the influence of Las Casas for a time, but did not destroy it altogether. He had yet one powerful friend at court in the person of Adrian the ambassador, to whom

Charles V., on his coming to Spain, had brought a cardinal's hat, and who was now known as the Cardinal of Tortosa. He also formed very soon the acquaintance of another upright and truly christian gentleman, who, knowing something of the Clerigo's business at court, undertook to help him and to coöperate with him in his mission of mercy. He was Monsieur de la Mur, the nephew of Monsieur de Laxao, the high chamberlain. Both uncle and nephew, having learned how to appreciate the disinterested zeal and the open character of the accomplished American priest, showed him much favor, which served him as a wedge to gain that of the other officers of the Flemish court. Meanwhile a sleepy ecclesiastic from Flanders had been appointed to fill the office of high chancellor ad interim, and it was with him that Las Casas had to deal in drafting the measures and arranging the details for the colonization of the West Indies with Spanish laborers, as the death of the grand chancellor had left in suspense the treatment of all American affairs. The relations of the imperturbable Flemish statesman and the fiery Hispano-American Clerigo are amusingly described by the latter. (*Hist. De Las Ind.* Book III. Chapter CIII).

"The dean (of a Northern Chapter) was so sluggish and phlegmatic that sometimes he dozed in open meetings of the council, and even when the Clerigo undertook to lecture him into some show of activity and goaded him on, he did not get vexed, owing to his exceedingly phlegmatic temperament. To the Clerigo, who gave him no rest morning, noon, or night, he remarked one day with a bland smile on his face: "*Commendamus in domino, domine Bartolomee, vestram diligentiam.*" The Clerigo was forced to laugh, although he rather felt like weeping at this way of attending to affairs of state. And, forsooth, when a hot headed man, like the Clerigo, and the quintessence of phlegm like the dean are yoked together to do business jointly, it is exceedingly trying to both individuals."

Chapter XIII.

Las Casas' Efforts to Work a Scheme of Colonization.

IN spite of Fonseca, who opposed him at every step, Las Casas succeeded, through the influence of his Flemish friends, in having his scheme of colonization approved, and he took upon himself the task of gathering the three thousand laborers and accompanying them to the West Indies. Letters of recommendation to all the archbishops, bishops, abbots and superiors of religious communities throughout the kingdom were given to the Clerigo, begging their assistance in facilitating the recruiting of the immigrants. Other letters were given him commanding all the officers of the crown to use their influence in the same direction. Instructions were also sent to the officers of the *Casa de Contratacion* at Seville, to receive, lodge and board the emigrants, to be sent there by Las Casas, and to get ships ready to transport them to America. Another decree directed the crown officers in Hispaniola and Cuba to receive, shelter and

provide for the incoming laborers, and to turn over to them the farms and plantations belonging to the king, as soon as they should land on the shores of those islands. Last of all a salary was assigned to the Clerigo as commissioner of immigration, and another to his assistant, both of whom were to travel through Spain at the expense of the crown.

Unfortunately Las Casas allowed himself to be persuaded by an influential member of the royal household to select, as his assistant, one Berrio, whose business was to be that of an advertising agent. On his and Las Casas' arrival in a city, town, village or country district, he was to act the part of a royal herald, call together the people, and make known to them the inducements offered by the crown to whosoever was willing to emigrate to America. The Clerigo, who wished to recommend the interests of his beloved Indians to his friends in court, during the three or four months required to gather the emigrants, spent some days in paying visits and in making the necessary preparations for his tour. Meanwhile Berrio visited Fonseca, who on seeing him, said: "What are you doing here? Why don't you start out?" "The Clerigo does not care to start as yet," answered Berrio,

"and I am commanded by the king to go with him." The archbishop replied angrily: "Go yourself alone, and do what you should have done with him."

Berrio. "I can't do anything without him, as the decree recites that I go with him and do what he tells me."

Thereupon Fonseca caused the decree to be altered, and instead of "do what he shall tell you," he inserted, "do what you shall think proper."

Technically speaking, the archbishop, as president of the council for Indian affairs, had the right to alter the wording (not the substance) of a royal decree. This alteration however, inspired by jealousy and hatred, unworthy of an archbishop and royal councillor, defeated the undertaking of the zealous missionary.

Las Casas started out with Berrio. On arriving in a village or town the inducements to emigrants were published, and the peasants were invited to hear in the church the American priest speak about America. The Protector of the Indians lacked none of the exuberant eloquence of the modern immigration agent; and the climate, the fertility and the healthfulness of Hispaniola and Cuba were painted in

glowing colors. Across the Atlantic the Spanish farmer, who was now a tenant and a vassal of his landlord, would become a freeholder and an independent citizen, with wealth within his reach. The attractions were irresistible, and so numerous were the well to do farmers found ready to sell their holdings and to inscribe their names among the prospective colonists, as to threaten the depopulation of entire estates, villages, and towns. The emigration ship was now under full sails having left port, figuratively speaking, with a favorable wind. But it soon ran aground. Spain, in 1518, had not yet shuffled off the feudal system of landtenure. The landlords and the tenants were then co-owners of the land. While the former could not expel the latter from his holding as long as the rent was paid, the tenant could not dispose of his interest in the farm without the consent of the landlord. Now let the reader consider that the large landed estates of Castile would have been rendered valueless to the landlords, had the cultivators of the soil been exported, and he will understand at once why the gentry of Spain made violent opposition to Las Casas' propaganda. After a speech or two by the enthusiastic orator, more would-be emigrants presented themselves

than he cared to enroll. But a day or a week after there would appear an announcement by the landlord of the place, informing the public that all purchases of holdings from the would-be emigrants would be considered as null and void. Then the American clergyman was politely requested to leave the estate. A remedy had to be found to the high handed proceedings of the counts, marquises and barons; and Las Casas went back to court to look for it.

The recruiting tour had lasted but a few days, when the Clerigo's assistant asked permission to go and pay a visit to his wife in another part of the country. Of course it was repeatedly refused. But Berrio, trusting to his credentials, which had been altered by Fonseca, took French leave of Las Casas and went. He not only visited his family, but undertook to transact some business on his own account. Then, some weeks later, two hundred men, mostly tavern keepers, ruffians and vagabonds, with a sprinkling of real agriculturists, arrived in Seville, accompanied by Berrio. They were the emigrants he had gathered; and, although no word had been received from Las Casas about them, on the strength of his assistant's credentials, were promptly shipped to America. In Santo Domingo,

where they arrived safely, nothing was known of them, as Las Casas had thought it advisable not to dispatch the royal decrees until he would be ready to sail himself with the immigrants. Of the two hundred, who landed without money or provisions, some fell sick and died very soon, and of the survivors some turned again tavern keepers, others found employment on cattle farms, and some on the piratical ships engaged in the Indian slave trade. As soon as the news of the emigrants' departure from Seville reached Las Casas, he lost no time in causing provisions to be shipped to feed them. But these arrived too late, when the laborers had already scattered, and the cargo was put to other uses.

When Las Casas arrived in Zaragoza from his recruiting tour, the king had already left, and the court was leaving for Barcelona. For several days no business was transacted. But scarcely had the statesmen settled down to work again, when the Clerigo was found on hand to push his immigration scheme. Adrian, who had taken from the beginning a lively interest in the undertaking, was first interviewed. On hearing that so many laborers were found ready and willing to emigrate to the West Indies, the cardinal very graci-

ously complimented the American priest, and remarked that in the course of time he would build up another kingdom for his majesty, the king. The archbishop of Burgos was next visited, who, when the Clerigo announced triumphantly that ten thousand, instead of three thousand laborers could be readily found to go to America, remarked "Great things indeed you are doing." But it was hard to tell if Fonseca meant to be complimentary or ironical.

The Protector of the Indians had not been many days in Barcelona when word came from America that all the royal farms in Hispaniola, Cuba, Porto Rico and Jamaica had been sold by the monks of St. Jerome. This was bad news, as they had been counted on to shelter the emigrants for one year, while engaged in clearing their own lands and building their own houses. Berrio's escapade, the sale of the farms and the violent opposition of the landlords to the emigration of their tenants threw a damper on the undertaking. And when the Clerigo at an informal meeting of the council of the Indies asked that he be placed in possession of the decree in which provision was made for the support of his emigrants for one year after their arrival on the Islands, Fonseca remarked:

"At this rate these laborers will cost the king more than an army of twenty thousand men." Las Casas who had never for a moment thought of importing peasants into Hispaniola or Cuba to set them adrift as soon as landed in a new country, and, many of them, penniless, replied rather vexedly: "Now that the Indians of the islands are dead and buried, does your lordship think of appointing me the executioner of the Christians?" He meant to say: You have caused the death of the Indians, and now you wish to appoint me the hangman of the Christians. Fonseca, who was no fool, understood him well, but bit his tongue and said no more. The decree for the support of the emigrants was, however, never issued, and without it Las Casas was not willing to assume any further responsibility in the matter, although ready to be paid into his hands was the cash necessary to transport the two hundred desirable agriculturists, whom he had already recruited, and who were ready to start. The emigration scheme was finally abandoned and Las Casas turned his attention to another project of legislation, which had in view the evangelization of some, at least, of the Indians on the American continent.

Chapter XIV.

Las Casas Tries a New Scheme for Saving and Evangelizing the Indians.

THE reader remembers how Fonseca had promptly rejected the proposal suggested by Friar Pedro de Cordova, that one hundred leagues of coast be set aside as a sort of reservation, where Spaniards were to be forbidden from settling or landing. In Hispaniola, Porto Rico and Jamaica perhaps seventy per cent of the native population had already perished, and it was evident that in Cuba they would soon meet with the same fate. Las Casas' efforts were now directed to save the natives of the continent. His conviction was, that the Indians could be brought to the knowledge and practice of the Christian religion and to adopt a civilized manner of life. This could only be done, he believed, by preaching to them the Gospel of Him, who had called Himself meek and humble of heart. Had he not gained, in Hispaniola and Cuba, by the practice of evangelical charity, that influence and ascendency over the untutored children of the forests, that made

them promptly comply with his smallest requests and desires? He proposed now to demonstrate by actual experience to the ruling powers, that what was done by the Apostles for the Greeks, the Romans and the barbarians, could be done to the aboriginal Americans. To the Indians he proposed to show that the religion of the Christians was not one of blood, murder and rapine, but of peace, fraternity and love.

The Dominicans and the French Franciscans had already established themselves in Venezuela, and built convents in two Indian pueblos. They had not landed with swords and fire-arms in their hands, but with their breviaries and the crucifix as their only weapons. Should these havens of peace, the monasteries, be destroyed in order that the Spaniards' thirst for gold might be quenched? Should the shepherds, the Friars, see their flocks slaughtered before their eyes? Shall Spain, the foremost nation in Christendom, allow a few of her cruel and unnatural sons to rob, enslave, murder, and finally wipe off the face of the earth the millions of helpless human beings of the western world, whom Providence had entrusted to her keeping? A remedy for the Indians should be easily found. No great army is required to prevent a set of

men, who called themselves Christians, and were supposed to be governed by her most Catholic Majesty, from destroying the countless peoples of unbounded regions, which were granted to Spain by the Vicar of Christ in order that the kingdom of God on earth might be extended and the numbers of believers increased.

These reflections, that spring spontaneously in one's heart, occupied the mind of the philanthropist, the priest, the apostle, the Protector of the Indians. But experience had taught him that, for the time being at least, neither royal decrees, or the devotedness of the ministers of religion, like the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the secular priests, could stem the torrent of blood which his countrymen had set aflowing in America. The insatiable thirst for gold must be reckoned with. When the proposition was made that one hundred leagues of coast be set aside, where the Indians could be evangelized peacefully, had not Fonseca remarked laconically: there is no money in it for the king?

A shrewd Cuban cacique, by the name of Hatuey, had honestly believed that the white man's god was gold, and to save himself and his people from his cruelty, endeavored to propitiate him by causing his

assembled tribe to give divine honor to a shining lump of the yellow metal. Las Casas devised a scheme, by which, he thought, he could replenish the royal coffers, and call into service the white man's love of gold in the work of converting and saving his beloved Indians. But, as the unfortunate Hatuey learned too late that the god gold could not be propitiated, and was burned at the stake, so Las Casas learned by bitter experience that the same censer cannot be used in offering incense to both God and mammon. I will let him unravel his own plan, which was an improvement on Pedro de Cordova's suggestion.

"It appeared to him that he could find in those islands (Hispaniola, Cuba, Porto Rico and Jamaica) as many as fifty men, friends of his, who, being well inclined and reasonable, would cheerfully engage in such a praiseworthy undertaking more through virtuous motives and a desire of serving God, than for the sake of profit, even supposing that they would keep an eye open to business, and that acquiring wealth in a lawful manner would be an incentive to them. He did not intend at first to select more than fifty individuals, for two reasons. First because it was his intention of ap-

proaching the Indians by peaceful ways, attracting them with presents, instead of accepting anything from them, unless they gave it of their own accord. To do so, fifty men were sufficient, inasmuch as the Indians are by nature good and inoffensive, unless provoked. One hundred or even five hundred would do no better, but, on the contrary become a hindrance to each other, the Spanish settlers being restless and quarrelsome. This needs no proof, as it is known to everybody. Secondly: because fifty men are more easily amenable to the dictates of reason, than one hundred or more. He calculated that ten thousand ducats would suffice to make a beginning, which would be contributed easily by fifty associates at the rate of two hundred ducats each. With that amount enough of provisions could be bought to last one year, many triflings from Europe to be given as presents to the Indians to attract them and to gain their affections, all miscellaneous articles necessary to the settlement, and lastly two caravels to transport men and goods to be kept and used afterwards as needed. He decided that all the fifty men should wear a white uniform, and over it certain crosses, of the same color and shape as those worn by the knights of Calatrava,

with the addition, over the crosses, of certain fernlike brooches, which made them more ornamental and attractive. He adopted this uniform, in order that his fifty companions should appear to the Indians as a different kind of men from the wicked Spaniards, whom they had seen or heard of, and in order that they should be easily distinguishable. They were to tell the Indians how they had been sent by the king of Spain, their good and powerful lord, that he (the king) having heard of the wrongs, scandals and oppression inflicted on them and their neighbors by the Spaniards, had been grieved at the news, and that it had all been done against his will. They were also to inform the Indians that now the king had sent to them the fifty white-robed men to greet them in his name, and to distribute amongst them many presents, which he sent them from Spain as tokens of his affection for them. Henceforth they would also be protected against the wrong doings of the other white men.

"Should God prosper the undertaking, it was the Clerigo's intention, to ask the Pope and the king to form his men into a religious sodality or confraternity."

The plan thus far was promising, but

Fonseca's zeal for the revenues of the king had also to be reckoned with, and satisfied. Inducements must therefore be offered, sufficient to move fifty decent Spanish settlers in America, to become the associates of the Protector of the Indians in the good work of conquering by peaceful ways, materially and spiritually, the inhabitants of the western continent to the crown of Spain, and to the Church. Las Casas had nothing less in view, and instead of one hundred leagues of coast, he asked for a thousand, that is for more than had then been explored. His intention was to make an experiment with fifty men; but, should it have proven successful, it would not have been difficult to locate other batches of fifty white-robed knights at different points of the coast. Las Casas' aim was also to oust from the continent the notorious Pedrarias de Avila, who was governor of the settlements in the South American countries. In wanton cruelty, and reckless destruction of life, Pedrarias had already acquired an unenviable reputation. The continent had yet seen little more than four years of his rule, when his Indian victims could have been counted by the hundred of thousands. Las Casas' dream was to convert the Indians of Central and South America and

then establish among them an ideal Christian government, such as the Jesuits succeeded, two centuries later, in giving to those farther South.

The plan of his Indian reservation and scheme of colonization are contained in the following articles of agreement, which he asked the king to accept. The Clerigo bound himself:

"1st. With the help of God to induce, within two years, ten thousand Indians to acknowledge, of their own accord, the sovereignty of the king of Spain, and to live peacefully with the Spaniards.

2d. To collect from the Indians and from the Spaniards settled within the reserved territory, (which was to be measured from a point on the Gulf of Venezuela and run along the southern coast one thousand leagues) and to pay into the royal treasury, five thousand ducats yearly, for the first three years; fifteen thousand for the next three; thirty thousand for the next four years; and sixty thousand ducats for every year thereafter.

3d. To establish, within five years, three colonies of fifty white-robed crusaders and a sufficient number of Dominican and Franciscan Fathers to evangelize the Indians.

4th. To erect a fortress in each of the

white settlements, as a protection against any possible uprising of the Indians.

5th. To explore the country, and faithfully to inform the king of the rivers and localities, where gold might be found.

6th. To comply with the five foregoing articles without doing any violence to the Indians, but on the contrary, to do nothing without their good will and full consent.

7th. To do every thing possible to convert the Indians to the Christian religion without putting the king to any expense whatever."

In consideration of these obligations, which Las Casas was to take on himself, he asked the king the following favors and privileges:

"1st. His majesty must ask from his Holiness the Pope a brief, authorizing the Clerigo to select from the Dominican and Franciscan Orders, twelve subjects, who would volunteer to become his associates in the work of the evangelization of the Indians, and to grant a plenary indulgence, *in articulo mortis*, to all who should die on the journey or while engaged in or helping the Missions.

2d. Authority should be given the Clerigo to select from among the Indians of Hispaniola and Cuba ten individuals, who would

go of their own accord, to the main land, on whatever Repartimiento of the Spaniards they might be found, and the latters' protests and opposition notwithstanding.

3d. All Indians stolen, or otherwise expatriated from within the limits of the one thousand leagues reserved, and now held in Cuba, Hispaniola, Porto Rico or Jamaica, should be delivered to the civil authorities to be brought back to their own countries.

4th. One twelfth of the income accruing to the crown from this enterprise of the Clerigo should be granted to the fifty laymen, who were to be his helpers and associates, with power of disposing of it by will to the first, second, third and fourth generation.

5th. All the fifty men should be knighted as knights of the golden epaulet, making their knighthood hereditary in perpetuity. They should be allowed the use of side arms, and coat-of-arms on the Islands and Continent of America, as soon as the king's income should reach the yearly sum of fifteen thousand ducats; and, when three settlements should be made, the fortresses erected, etc., then their privileges of full-fledged knighthood of the golden epaulets should be recognized throughout all the domains of his majesty.

6th. The fifty men and their descendants were to be forever exempted from all taxation on personalty and realty, except in the forms expressed in this capitulation.

7th. The Clerigo should have the right to appoint the officers of the fortresses to be erected and of the white settlements to be made.

8th. The knights, with the permission of the Clerigo (but not without it) should have the right to trade for pearls with the Indians, giving a royalty to the king of one fifth of the profits, as long as his yearly income from the reservation would not exceed fifteen thousand ducats; and after, of one seventh. The same rule was to apply to profits derived from bartering Castilian goods for gold. Of the gold mined or gathered by the knights, one sixth should go as a royalty to the king.

9th. Each knight was authorized to buy from the Indians not more than one square league of land to be used as farm, plantation or pasture, the same to be his in perpetuity and in fee simple, the crown of course retaining all rights of sovereignty.

10th. As soon as one settlement of fifty knights should be made each one of them should have the right to import three negro slaves, and when as many as three settle-

ments of fifty men should be made, seven more slaves for each man should then be allowed to be imported, provided that it should appear advisable to the Clerigo to do so. The slaves were to be half males and half females.

11th. Each knight should have the privilege of citizenship in each one of the white settlements, if he owned a house and kept an agent there, while engaged in developing his lands, provided that at no time, he should enjoy said rights of citizenship in more than five settlements.

12th. The knights should enjoy a total exemption from the tax on the salt consumed by themselves and their households while on the reservation.

13th. Each knight should enjoy the right of importing into the reservation any merchandise, goods or cattle, for ten years from any of the Spanish dominions, free from port, import or export duty.

14th. The knights should be required to obtain mining licenses ; but these should be granted, whenever asked for, without the payment of any fees.

15th. In case of death of one of the knights, his immediate heir, if of age, is bound to report in person, at the reservation for duty, and if a minor, through a substi-

tute, of whose qualifications the Clerigo was to be the judge ; and if no substitute is appointed by the heir or his representative, the Clerigo was empowered to appoint one at his discretion to do duty, during the heir's minority.

16th. Merchants and traffickers, who should cast anchor in any of the ports of the reservation for the purpose of bartering, were forbidden under pain of death, and the confiscation of all their property, from doing any harm or damage, giving scandal or stealing from the Indians, and from tarrying on shore after their commercial operations were completed.

17th. The Indians of the reservation were to be assured by the Clerigo of their liberty, as long as they continued to live peacefully and to pay tribute as other vassals of the king, who pledged himself never to place the Indians of terra firma and of the Islands within the limits of the reservation, under the tutelage of the Spaniards or to parcel them out into Repartimientos, or to allow their enslavement.

18th. The king should send to, and keep on the reservation, a royal treasurer and an auditor to receive and receipt for the amounts due to him according to these stipulations, and to keep him informed of the doings and progress of the colony.

19th. The king should also appoint a judge for the administration of civil and criminal justice to the fifty knights, and other people, Indians as well as white men on the reservation, provided that the said judge be not allowed to meddle in other affairs of the colony or the conversion of the Indians, except when requested by the Clerigo. The colonists should have the right to appeal from his sentences to the *Audiencia* (court of appeals) in the Island of Hispaniola.

20th. The king reserved the right to send, every ten months, or as often as he saw fit, commissioners to report on the progress of the colony and to take charge of the gold, pearls and other property belonging to the crown in virtue of this agreement.

21st. Should, during the first ten years, any island or mainland be discovered by the colonists either North or South, the discoverers should enjoy the same privileges and emoluments that were, by letters patent, granted to Velasquez for the discovery of Yucatan.

22d. The king bound himself to carry, on his ships (the colonists paying reasonable freight charges) to the reservation, fifty mares, thirty cows, fifty hogs and fifteen pack mules or donkeys.

23rd. As soon as the revenues of the king shall have reached the yearly sum of fifteen thousand ducats, he binds himself to contribute two thousands of them to the conversion of the Indians to the Christian religion and to civilized life.

24th. The following items were also to be charged to the king, as soon as his revenues should reach the sum of fifteen thousand ducats: the provisions necessary for the first eight months' residence in the reservation by the colonists; all freight charges incurred in transporting the colonists and their goods to the reservation; the expenses of building the fortresses and collecting the revenues of the king; whatever presents should be made to the Indians or their caciques in order to induce them to enter the service of the king as his free vassals, provided that no more than three hundred ducats yearly, or three thousand ducats in ten years be spent in such allowances.

25th. The king pledges himself to give credence to no reports concerning the workings and progress of the colony, except such as he shall receive from his treasurer and auditor.

26th. The fifty knights bind themselves juridically to abide by the articles of this

agreement under penalty of forfeiting all their possessions.

27th. The Clerigo was empowered to give new rivers, provinces and localities such names as he thought proper."

This remarkable and peculiar contract between the ruler of one half of Europe and of all that was known of America, and the simple American priest, was solemnly signed with all due formality by Charles V. in his own handwriting and by Las Casas the 19th day of May 1520 in the city of Coruña.

But the biography of Las Casas would be incomplete without some detailed account of his struggles, maneuvres and pertinacious perseverance necessary to obtain the royal signature to the foregoing agreement. The project naturally had to pass through the hands of the councillors composing the bureau for Indian affairs. Some of these had not forgotten that the Clerigo had been the cause of their loosing their Repartimientos in the times of Ximenez. Moreover the new departure of attempting to convert, and bring into subjection the Indians by peaceful means, was a condemnation of the archbishop's former policy of enslavement and oppression. Las Casas therefore could expect nothing but opposition to his

scheme from the council of the Indies. He spoke of it privately to the Flemish statesmen, and discussed it with the grand chancellor in particular, who approved of it and used his influence, in a quiet way, to have it accepted by Charles V. But no sooner was it made public and proposed to the councillors for their consideration, than these converted themselves, to use Las Casas' own expression, into a battery of artillery to attack it and demolish it, because the very shadow of the Clerigo had become to them more hateful than the fleshless skeleton of death. No serious objection could, however, be made to the new plan. There is no money in it for the king, Fonseca had said, when the petition of Pedro de Cordova for an Indian reservation was presented to him. But Las Casas had now provided for an income for the royal treasury. To reject it without debate or consideration, was not feasible, because it had been presented by the grand chancellor himself. They decided to shelve it, in the hope that the penniless American priest could not much longer hang around their offices to press his project of creating and colonizing knights to help converting the Indians by peaceful methods. In fact Las Casas had already spent five or six years in

going and coming from America, in following the court from place to place, in looking after the doings of the Monks of St. Jerome, in recruiting laborers, etc. His funds were wellnigh exhausted, and to make matters worse, just at that time, when his business should have been pressed to an issue, Xevres and the grand chancellor had to leave for France on an embassy. Of course, during their absence, no attention was paid to the Clerigo's business, who, wellnigh worn out by the councillors' inactivity, remarked one day to Monsieur de la Mure, that he would be compelled to abandon his undertaking for lack of funds to remain longer at court. The Dutch nobleman and another officer of the king, a kinsman of his, came to his assistance with a loan.

On the return of Xevres and the grand chancellor Las Casas became once more a frequent attendant at the meetings of the councillors for the Indies. Fonseca and his associates, who were often handled without gloves by the American priest to the great satisfaction of the Flemish courtiers, daily advanced some new or frivolous objection to the Clerigo's plan, which, though promptly answered, afforded the Spanish councillors pretexts for postponing

from day to day the final decision. Some outside pressure was necessary. The perseverance, or it might be called the pertinacity of Las Casas and his unceasing activity in behalf of the Indians has been a subject of admiration for all students of early American history. The fertility of his mind in devising means to his ends was perhaps equally as remarkable.

Each court of Europe, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had its official preachers, and that of Spain had eight of them. As these proved themselves the friends of the American Indians, and the advocates of right and liberty, I think that their names should not be left unregistered. They were: Luis and Antonio Coronel, who had obtained their degrees in theology in the university of Paris; Doctor La Fuente, who was doing honor to the newly established (by Ximenez) university of Alcala. These three were secular priests, like the fourth, whose name is not given. The fifth was Miguel de Salamanca, a Dominican, who died bishop of Cuba. The sixth was a Franciscan Friar named Alonzo de Leon, and the seventh an Augustinian by the name of Father Dionisio. Las Casas, who wrote these details thirty-two years after, could not remember the name of the last one.

"The duty of these preachers," he thought, "is to defend truth, and to call the king's attention to the great evils, which dishonored the Christian religion, and damned the souls of millions of their neighbors." He therefore decided to engage, if possible, their zeal and their influence in behalf of his Indians. At first he approached them privately, and finding them willing listeners, he prevailed on them to meet together and to hear the tale of woes that came from beyond the seas. I'll let the reader imagine with what burning eloquence the first American priest painted to the preachers the pitiless oppression, the brutal slavery, the savage carnage of his beloved Indians by the Spaniards. The blame lay at the door of the bureau for Indian affairs, and with archbishop Fonseca in particular.

Those eight preachers were no mere ornamental orators hired to tickle the ears of royalty on state religious occasions. Their sermons and instructions, they thought, should serve to shape and mould the morals and the policies of those, who then ruled over the greatest empire the world had ever seen. They met together in the convent of St. Catherine, and after mature deliberation decided, that it was their duty before God

to endeavor to stop the extermination of the American Indians. Their meetings were numerous and were always called by Las Casas. "Day after day," says he, "at the same hour that Fonseca gathered his councillors in his house to devise means to destroy the Indians, the Clerigo called the preachers together in the convent of St. Catherine, to formulate plans for saving them." They first bound themselves by solemn oath, taken in the presence of Las Casas and on the gospels, to stand by each other and not to falter or withdraw from the compact until they should obtain from the council, or if necessary, from the king, the abolition of slavery or Repartimientos of the Indians, their liberty and protection.

The scope of their deliberations had widened. With them the question was no longer the obtaining for the zealous American priest a piece of unexplored territory for an Indian reservation, wherein to experiment in the conversion of its inhabitants, but to put a stop to the enslavement, oppression and destruction, by the Spaniards, of the aborigines. Las Casas did not accomplish the work of firing the zeal and the eloquence of the eight royal preachers single-handed. There happened to be then present at court two of those noble French

Franciscans from Picardy, who had established a monastery at Cumana, in what is now Venezuela. One of them was the brother of the queen of Scotland. The Clerigo introduced them to the grand chancellor and to the preachers and invited them to several of their meetings to confirm his own statements concerning the cruelties and barbarities of the Spaniards in America.

The preachers, while firm in their resolutions to leave nothing undone to obtain their object, began by complying with the injunction of Christ of first admonishing privately their erring brethren, i. e. Fonseca and his councillors. Having agreed upon the manner in which the admonition should be administered, they presented themselves unheralded at a meeting of the council. "Most illustrious Lords, and Most Reverend Archbishop," they said through their spokesman Miguel de Salamanca, "we, the preachers of his majesty the king, have ascertained that in the Indies our countrymen have committed unheard of crimes against the native population, wholesale thefts and massacres, that have provoked the anger and the vengeance of God, and have brought dishonor on the Christian religion. Numberless human beings have

perished and hence large islands and a portion of the mainland, erstwhile teeming with population, are now desolate and uninhabited, to the everlasting disgrace of the Spanish crown. For, witness Holy Writ, 'in the multitude of the people there is honor and dignity for the king, while contrarywise a decreasing nation points to his dishonor and disgrace.' Knowing as we do the wisdom and ability of the distinguished personages composing this council, to whom God has intrusted the government of the New World, and whom he shall call to a strict account for their official policies and conduct, and knowing also that those peoples beyond the seas, who heretofore lived peacefully in their own countries, could not have given us cause for exterminating them, we were abashed at first at the intelligence received, but concluded that they alone should be held accountable for the irreparable damage done, who governed them. It is our duty, as preachers to his majesty, to expose, to combat, and, by our exhortations, to endeavor to extirpate every abuse, that dishonors and offends the Divine Majesty of God. Hence we decided to present ourselves to your lordships and speak to you of said crimes, and to beg you to explain to us how so

great an evil could have been left so long unremedied. And, inasmuch, even to this day, such thefts and massacres continue, we admonish you to put a stop to them. By so doing, we need not tell you, your lordships will deserve God's choicest blessings, and, by not heeding our warning, his most terrible vengeance. We beg of you also, with all the respect and reverence due to your persons, not to attribute our coming thus to address you to presumption or temerity, but to receive our admonition in the spirit that dictated it, which is, a desire of doing that, to which we are bound by God's commandments."

The fearless speech wounded the councillors to the quick, especially Fonseca. He gave vent to his spleen in the following words which were taken down by the preachers: "Rash and daring has been your presumption in coming to reprimand the king's council. Casas must be behind this affair. What have the king's preachers to do with his government, which he carries on through his several councils? He feeds you that you may preach the Gospel to him, and not to have you meddle with the government of his dominions."

The unwitty but insulting words of the archbishop stung Doctor De la Fuente,

who replied: "Casas is nowhere here about, but the *casa* (house) of God, i. e. his honor, required our presence here, and to defend that honor we are ready to lay down our lives. Does it appear to your lordship presumptuous that eight doctors in theology, who can sit in and address a whole ecumenical council of the universal Church, should come to proffer an admonition to a council of the king? It is our right and our duty to come and admonish the king's councillors, and hence we are here, my lords, to exhort you and to notify you that you must correct the many wrongs perpetrated in the Indies, which are the cause of damnation of so many souls, and of so many sins against God. And unless you do correct them, my lords, we shall preach against you as against those who do not keep the commandments of God, and do not do their duty to their king. And this, sirs, is not only to preach, but to comply with the Gospel."

De la Fuente's speech surprised the councillors and frightened them. One of them, a layman, blandly answered him: "This council is doing its duty; it has formulated many very wise laws for the good of the Indies, which, though your presumptuous conduct does not deserve it, we

shall show you, that you may realize the hight of your temerity and of your pride."

"You shall have to show us those laws, and if they will be found good and just, we shall praise them, but if bad and unjust, we shall send them to the devil and whomsoever upholds them with them. Your lordships, I presume, do not wish to keep them company on the road."

The preachers were about to leave unceremoniously, when the councillors, changing their tone, assured them that they would be glad to show them all the laws that had been enacted, and that their opinions on them would be welcomed. The eight doctors were invited to come back another day for that purpose, and the invitation was accepted. On their second visit, having heard said laws read to them, the preachers asked for time to put their opinions in writing. They, who are familiar with the noble Castilian tongue, may read it *in extenso* in the CXXXV. and CXXXVI. chapter of the third book of *Historia de Las Indias* by Las Casas. But as I have not met anywhere in history a more eloquent or more forcible plea for American liberty, by either lawyer, canonist or theologian, I'll give of it the first English translation, however disfigured and

emasculated it may appear in a foreign dress. The translation is a free one and only the preamble is left out.

"My Lords. To say that we are the men directly appointed by Almighty God to instruct you would be intolerable arrogance; but we do affirm that we are, as it were, the eyes of this noble court. While you are profoundly absorbed in the transaction of temporal affairs, we employ our time in the study of the law of God and of the writings of its expounders. To do the duties of our office, and thus do the will of God, we must be ever on the watch to see, if in every department and in every office of this court the law of God is observed. Those who are zealous in the performance of their duties we must praise, but the guilty and the laggard we are bound to admonish, and, if necessary, to denounce, in order that they may either reform or be held unexcusable. Had we done our full duty in the past, perhaps there would not now be so much corruption in many places. May God forgive us our past shortcomings, and give us strength to repair them in the future. That we might not be found guilty of further negligence God was pleased to move and to quicken our intelligences to give serious consideration to the important

subject upon which we are here to address you. A subject so vital to the interests of God and of his Church, that perhaps not in a thousand years has Divine Providence assigned to a ruler or to a nation a mission more important than the guardianship and christianization of the countless thousands of people beyond the seas. It is zeal, my lords, that has moved us thus far, and it was zeal that made us study and ponder on the measures which have been adopted by this council. We studied them to enable ourselves to decide if they would suffice to remedy the past evils, and to prevent further ones, and to see if they gave promise of bearing all the fruits, which God and his Church expects of that part of the king's dominion, and which this nation should be able to offer them. This is the conclusion which careful study and mature deliberation have led us to. Should we take it for granted that the Repartimientos or Encomiendas of Indians are just and right, then we say that your lordships could not have enacted better or holier laws, to prevent their illtreatment by our countrymen, and to advance their spiritual welfare. But everything considered, it is evident, that they will never afford them that protection, which we are bound by the law of God to

give them, and of which they stand in need as long as the Repartimientos are allowed to stand, and this for two principal reasons: 1st, because your laws, let them be ever so good and holy, never will be properly executed as long as the Repartimientos are allowed to have a legal existence. 2d, because your laws, though good in themselves, are based on a most unjust foundation, namely that of the Repartimientos, which have been the cause of wellnigh all the evils with which the Indies are afflicted. As long as that cause is not removed it shall remain impossible to cure the evils. As you see, we have but two propositions to prove, and if we shall prove the second, we shall have proved them both. The greatest of the evils, that have depopulated some of those countries, and that, which will desolate the remaining ones, that, which cannot reasonably or with justice be tolerated, are the Encomiendas of the Indians or parcelling them out to the Spaniards, and allowing the latter to force the Indians to work for them, appropriating to themselves all the fruits of the bondsmen's labor. The Encomiendas as they exist now, are detrimental, 1st to the Indian's wellfare; 2d they are unreasonable and unwise; 3d they are against the in-

terests of the Spanish crown; 4th they are opposed to all the rules of civil and canon law; 5th they contradict the teachings of moral philosophy and theology; 6th they are forbidden by the laws of God and of his Church. You shall see, my lords, if, while as damnable an institution as the Encomiendas is allowed to stand, the evils, directly traceable to it, can be eradicated by statutory enactments. That you may not accuse us of exaggeration, I will proceed to prove logically and to your satisfaction each of our six assertions.

We said first that the Encomiendas are detrimental to the Indian's wellfare. We cannot argue against facts. Since the time, when, under pretext of bringing into close contact the Indians with the Spaniards, in order that, it was said, the former might learn from the latter the Christian religion, the system of Repartimientos was established, those once thickly inhabited countries became deserts. Should all mankind set to thinking for the purpose of devising a plan more destructive of society among the Indians, they could not find it. For the Encomiendas make a state or commonwealth impossible among them. In every civil community of men there must necessarily be found a diversity of offices,

professions and trades. But all these are merged into one by the Repartimientos, that of digging dirt. Who has ever heard of a whole people or nation of diggers? As things are now, there can't be amongst the Indians either soldiers, philosophers, men of letters, tradesmen, etc., and thus those peoples, fitted out by the Creator to form themselves into well ordered nations, are forced to engage only in the lowest occupation, that of digging dirt. Our islands beyond the Atlantic shall be compared to those on which the Romans exiled the martyrs and the malefactors, *ad fodienda metalla*. Nay, we do worse than the Romans; for they did not kill the exiles with labor, as the Spaniards do the natives of the Indies. The Encomiendas are detrimental to the Indians because they make slaves of them, and to enslave men is against the law of nature and the law of God. That the Encomiendas are nothing less than slavery is proved by your own ordinances. In fact one of them ordered the Licenciado Figueroa to set free those among the Indians, who should ask for their liberty. They must therefore have been slaves. However, in order that our argument may not have even the semblance of cavil or sophistry, we shall prove *aliunde* that the

Encomiendas constitute real slavery. He is free who can dispose of his own actions. But, if the life, the industry, the work and all the fruits thereof of the Indians belong to some one else, how can they be said to be free? Their liberty is but a dead letter, written in your laws, but unknown to the unfortunate bondsmen. If you say, my lords, that they are paid a salary for their labors, and that they are fed, we answer that the salary and the food they get is not equal to half what the legal slaves get here in Spain. The cloak of liberty, with which the Spaniards clothe the Indians, is but an additional instrument of torture and of death. Were they legal slaves, they would have a commercial value, and their masters would care for them and treat them better, as their death would be a loss to them. But granting, for argument's sake, that the Indians are free, is it recorded in the annals of history that any other people were ever treated as the native Indian is by the Spaniard? The slavery to which Pharao subjected the children of Israel is but an ounce in the pound compared to the condition of the Indians in the Indies. The Jews, though compelled to work, were not robbed of their possessions by the Egyptians, and, although in bondage, were

never dispossessed of their wealth. And so true it is that they were well treated that later, while in the wilderness, they wished to return to the flesh pots of Egypt. The children of Israel in slavery increased and multiplied; but, though you left the Indians with a phantom of liberty, they perished and made of their country a desert. Who ever heard of the prince or of the tyrant that compelled his people to work for him or his favorites more than nine months in the year? The blind can see that it is unjust. Can we expect anything better than a commensurate punishment for such an unspeakable crime? May we not expect (and would to God that we prove false prophets) that it shall cause the undoing and destruction of this our Spanish commonwealth? In seeking to prove that the Encomiendas are detrimental to the Indians, we have proved that they are detrimental to Spain also. To force the Indians, who were bred and born in idleness, to work continuously in the mines, nine months in the year, means to condemn them to death. The forty days which you call vacation, serve only to hasten their destruction. In fact, during that time, they are required to work their lands, which is but a continuation, if a change, of labor. The frequent

change of climate from the mines to the fields, the change of diet and mode of life, instead of strengthening, debilitates them more and more. At the end of the forty days of partial freedom, experience has taught, they reënter the mines to succumb and perish.

The Encomiendas are in every way unwise and unreasonable. All the laws that your lordships may formulate, be they as numerous as those of both the civil and the criminal codes combined, all the provisions that the judges in the Indies may adopt, let both the legislators and the judges be as incorruptible as the angels of God, will not avail to correct the abuses which yearly decimate the Indians. Who shall coerce the Spaniards to keep the laws? In mountain fastnesses, where only the eye of God and the fowls of the air see them, where a justice of the peace, a court or a marshal is not to be found within fifty or sixty leagues, those Christians manage the Indians with an iron hand. Who shall bridle their greed or curb their avarice, and prevent them from working the Indians to death? Especially when before them shines the yellow metal *si dolosi spes refulserit numi?* Your lordships have legislated as to the quality and the quantity of food to

be given the Indians. But who shall weigh the meat before it goes into the pot? Who shall accuse the Spaniard, if the Indian die under the lash or the cudgel? You will say that, the *visitadores* (visitors) will inquire into abuses and punish the delinquent. At the mines there are only the Indians and their masters or their representatives. Will the wretched slave dare to accuse his master to the visitador, if, the latter gone, it will be in his power to roast him alive? We need not go to the Indies for proofs of our assertion. If there be an inquest held in a murder case, do we go to the servants or slaves of the suspected criminal for the evidence of his guilt? You well know, my lords, that the Indian is but a servant or slave of him, of whose Encomienda he is part and parcel. But experience has taught that, should the Indian complain, his testimony would not be accepted, because the visitador looks upon the master as a man or perhaps as a benefactor, and upon the slave as a beast. Unless you place on every Repartimiento an angel, who neither sleeps or eats, you cannot, my lords, correct the cruel abuses by statutory enactments, as long as the Encomiendas are allowed to stand. The Encomiendas are detrimental to the king, be-

cause they deprive him of that, which, according to the scriptures, make him great and powerful, the people. Secondly, because they deprive him of the revenues, which might be legitimately derived from the Indies, and which would increase his wealth and that of his kingdom. Me think, I hear those fertile lands themselves cry out that the Spaniards are making them barren, while elsewhere throughout the world many human beings are starving. Thirdly, they are detrimental to the king, because they deprive him of the only just title he has to the supreme dominion over those countries. Every prince, king or ruler can only have a title to his dominions in one of the following manners: 1st, by right of inheritance; 2d, by the transferance by a superior power (no human being is without a superior) and for a just cause, of a people from the dominion of one to that of another ruler; 3rd, by the submission of a people themselves, and of their own accord to the dominion of the ruler. He is neither prince, king or ruler, but a tyrant, who does not hold one of these titles to his possessions. Now it is notorious that the kings of Spain do not hold their transatlantic possessions by either the right of inheritance or the free will of the Indians.

Their only title to them is the apostolic concession which, it expressly recites, was made for the good and the advancement of those people. As the Encomiendas oppress them and destroy them or make them unwilling vassals, it follows that they destroy the only title that our monarchs have to rule over the Indians. The Encomiendas proclaim our monarchs tyrants. For all this the king shall have to give a strict account to God; and it behooves your lordships, who, as his agents and representatives, have assumed his responsibility, to look into and to scrutinize the subject with mature deliberation and care. We must go a step farther. The Encomiendas are worse than an open enemy in battle array. That enemy could only deprive the king of those possessions, but never of his right to them. The Encomiendas deprive him of that right, and, in the end, of the possessions themselves.

The Encomiendas break all rules of philosophy and of moral theology. The end of man is the possession of God in the hereafter. The practice of the moral virtues is the means to that end, and the present life was intended to give us an opportunity to practice them. Life itself then is a means to virtue, as food and raiment are

the means to life, and money the means of procuring food and raiment. Is it right to barter the future and the present life, the virtues and the very food of the Indians for the sake of money? Nay, more. Experience has taught that the thirst for gold has not only prevented the moral virtues and religion being taught to the Indians, but it caused the Christians to lose their faith and to abandon the practice of the Christian virtues. They are growing more inhuman and more merciless than the tigers in the forest. The Encomiendas are manifestly not according to the will of God, *qui vult omnes homines salvos fieri.* Without faith, your lordships know it, it is impossible to enter eternal life; and, because faith comes from hearing, the Son of God came to preach it, and, in order that every creature might hear it, he transformed his twelve rude disciples into masters of eloquence and wisdom. At last in order that the glad tidings of Redemption might reach those vast transatlantic regions, the Indians were intrusted to our care. But alas! the damnable Encomiendas choke the voice of the apostles and estop the work of God. For how shall the preacher instruct a people oppressed and broken down by labor? The Spaniards possessed of Encomiendas are

the greatest enemies of those apostolic clergymen, who are engaged in the evangelization of the Indians. They fear that if their bondsmen are taught to know the difference between virtue and vice, they will also learn how deficient is the former and how abundant is the latter in their masters. The Indians, they think, hate us now, but they will look upon us as devils incarnate, if they learn the Christian religion. And it is not sufficient to preach the faith ; the words of the preacher must not only carry conviction to the intelligence of the hearer, but it must also gain their affections, and touch their hearts. How shall the Indians be convinced of the divine origin of God's law, and how shall they learn how to love it if the so-called Christians are their cruel taskmasters, oppressors and executioners?

The Encomiendas are, last of all, detrimental to the Church of God. Inasmuch as in the Indies everybody is busy digging the earth, to look for gold, those fertile lands remain untilled and unproductive. Hence no tithes can be collected, wherewith to support zealous bishops and priests to teach the Gospel to as many, (as would be converted) as there are now faithful throughout the world. Let those, who advo-

cate and uphold the system of Encomiendas, tremble at the strict account they shall have to give to God, Our Lord, who is no accepter of persons, and who cares not a farthing whether he, who is to be judged, be a great prince, a prelate or a swine-herd. It is time, my Lords, for you to act. God and the king, to honor you, and as a testimonial of your past services, have charged you with this delicate and difficult mission of eradicating so many evils and uplifting the yoke from an oppressed people. If you do it, my lords, we shall pray that God may give you honor and prosperity in this life, and an endless reward in the next. Amen."

The oratorical form of the foregoing address belongs to the preachers exclusively. But as Las Casas was their principle source of information, the substance of it must be attributed to him.

Thus far the Clerigo and the preachers had acted harmoniously. But when they came to suggesting means for correcting abuses, they parted ways. All agreed that the Encomiendas must be abolished. But the eight doctors were of opinion and recommended that the Indians be gathered into pueblos or villages of some two hundred families each; that to each pueblo be assigned a governor with a fixed salary to

be paid by the king, who should train them to agricultural pursuits, assigning to each family a tract of land to be owned in severalty, and worked under his supervision. The governor should also select a number of male Indians from every pueblo and assign them to the work of the mines at certain seasons of the year. No individual however should be forced to said work more than six months in the year, and the profits of mining and farming should accrue to the Indians exclusively, after deducting the expenses of administration, a reasonable royalty for the king, and the tithes due the Church.

Las Casas, who knew the mines had been in the past, and that they would continue to be the graves of the Indians, would agree to nothing less than absolute freedom for his protegées. Let them go back, he argued, to their native hamlets, to their native clime and surroundings, let them again work in their own way their own patches of maiz, of cotton, of sugar, the yucca root, etc., and like rabbits, they will once more multiply in their forest homes, instead of perishing suffocated, so to say, by the atmosphere of an artificial civilization forced on them too suddenly. Meanwhile the priest will go to them, evangelize them

and teach them the beauties and the benefits of Christian life without depriving them of their liberty. Civilization, the social and political life of the old world will come later, gradually and naturally. Had not the preachers' plan been tried by the monks of St. Jerome and failed? And why? Because even if a scaffold should be erected near the door of every Spaniard's house in the Indies, the natives would continue to be oppressed by the white as long as these were allowed any authority over the Indians. The council had listened to the address of the preachers respectfully, and had promised to adopt of their suggestions what appeared to be advisable and feasible. But Las Casas had lost faith in Fonseca and his councillors. He knew that nothing would come of their promises; and as the doctors had come to the conclusion that they had fully complied with their duty and their oath, the American priest was left once more to prosecute singlehanded his scheme of an Indian reservation and colonization.

Finding it necessary to come to open hostilities with Fonseca and his council, he detailed at length to all the favorites of Charles V. (especially to the Dutchmen) now in writing, now in private conversations, all the rottenness and wickedness of

their former administration of Indian affairs, not forgetting to explain how in past years they had held Encomiendas of thousands of Indians, most of whom had been worked to death by their agents to fill the coffers of the absentee landlords. The past recommendations of the Clerigo had caused the loss of their Encomiendas, and hence this vengeful opposition to every thing proposed by the Protector of the Indians in their behalf. The youthful but shrewd monarch, who kept well informed about the doings and pleadings of the American priest, decided at last to have his scheme looked into and studied by a special committee appointed *ad hoc*, and left at first the selection of its members to the Clerigo himself. But, fearing criticism for appearing to decide in advance the point to be discussed, he ordered that all the different councils of state, that for the Indies as well as that of war, the one for the government of Flanders, that of the inquisition, etc., should sit as an investigating committee to inquire into the advisability of accepting Las Casas' plan of colonization within the boundaries of an Indian reservation. The meetings of this committee were quite numerous, and as many as forty councillors attended them, among them the cardi-

nal of Tortosa, the future Pope Adrian the IV. With some complacency, Las Casas remarks that it was quite an extraordinary occurrence to see a simple priest, without a title, or an estate, and the most hated man in the Indies induce all the court of Spain to sit in judgment as between a royal council and himself over a proposal made by him alone. But he knew not himself the magnitude and importance of what he was asking. The one thousand leagues of coast, which no man should set foot upon without his consent, had been reduced to two hundred and fifty. Nevertheless, by referring to a map, the reader will see that his Indian reservation would have included the greatest portion of Spanish South America, from the northern boundary of the present republic of Venezuela to Cape Horn. He learned it however before his death; for he wrote about the year 1550 that, although only two hundred and sixty leagues had been granted, the territory of his reservation extended two or three thousand leagues inland.

A certain Licenciado Aguirre, member of more than one royal council, having heard that Las Casas (whom he had always admired as a disinterested and zealous priest) had promised the king certain revenues in

exchange for privileges and favors to be granted to the knights of the golden epaulet, was scandalized at the new way of preaching the gospel, which, it seemed to him, bore the stamp of a worldly bargain. "I would never have believed that of Las Casas;" said he to a friend. The Clerigo heard of the remark, and meeting him one day, "Sir," he said, "if you should see Our Lord Jesus Christ illtreated by some villain who should lay hands upon Him and load Him with abuse, would you not beg and entreat with tears, that He be turned over to you in order that you may adore Him, serve Him, and do Him homage, and everything else that would suggest itself to you as a Christian?" "Most assuredly," said Aguirre. "And if the villain would not give Him to you, but would offer to sell Him, would you not buy Him?" Aguirre: "Most undoubtedly." "Then," said the Clerigo: "That has been my way of doing. When I left the Indies, Our Lord was being scourged, buffeted and crucified, not once, but a thousand times, as far as the work of our countrymen is concerned, who beat down the Indians, oppress them and deprive them of the opportunity to be converted, by killing them, and sending them into eternity with-

out faith and without sacraments. I have begged and I have entreated times without number the royal council, to put a stop to the crimes of the Spaniards, who block their way to eternal life by enslaving them. I have begged that the bondsmen be set free, and that the Spaniards be not allowed to go where the missioners, the servants of God, have already begun to preach the gospel, in order that the natives may be not made to curse the name of Christ on account of the cruelties and the scandals of the whites. They answered me that it was not advisable to turn over those countries to the friars, who would pay no tribute to the king. As I saw that it was their intention to sell me the privilege of preaching the gospel, and to sell me Christ who was thus by them scourged, buffeted and crucified, I made up my mind to buy him by promising worldly goods, revenues and riches to the king in the manner you have heard of."

The ingenious answer, which displayed a burning love of God and of the Indians, His creatures, silenced any further criticism of his scheme from all well-meaning men, and increased among the courtiers, who heard of it, the number of his friends. But the battle by any means was not yet over. Fonseca received it as an insult that the

Clerigo should have been allowed to name several members of the commission, and knowing in advance that he would find nearly the whole court his antagonists, and the partisans of the simple American priest, refused several times to attend its meetings, alleging indispositions and other frivolous pretexts. But the grand chancellor fetched him more than once by simply calling him to council without indicating the subject to be discussed, and even allowing the impression to prevail that it would be now a council of war, now a council of state, of both of which departments the bishop was a member. Las Casas in his *Historia de Las Indias*, describes amusingly several passages at arms between himself and the archbishop of Burgos. The Clerigo, though having no voice in the council, was called in several times as a witness, and to defend his own cause. The plaudits freely given to the brave priest, and the almost unanimous opposition of the councillors, so angered the courtier prelate, that he ceased to appear at the palace without the company of influential and popular Antonio Fonseca, his brother. The final decision reached at these cabinet meetings, as we would call them nowadays, was that the Clerigo be granted what he asked, and that

he be afforded an opportunity, through the ministration of the Dominicans and Franciscans, of having the gospel preached to the South American Indians. The necessary decrees were being prepared, and Las Casas thought that his labors at court had come to an end. But Fonseca had not yet given up his case. It happened just then that Gonzalo Hernando de Oviedo had arrived from the settlement governed or misgoverned by Pedrarias in South America. The famous official chronicler had gone to the Indies an appointee of Fonseca, to be *veedor* or royal inspector of that distant colony. There were then as usual hanging around the court agents sent by the Spaniards in Hispaniola, Porto Rico, Cuba and Jamaica to protect their interests, the Repartimientos, and to counteract the influence of the Clerigo, who had assumed the task of destroying them. At the instigation of Fonseca Oviedo and the Hispano-Americans got together, and presented, through the Indian council, a memorial to the king, in which they gave their reasons why the grants made to Las Casas should be annulled and the policy of the archbishop of Burgos readopted. They offered at the same time to guarantee double the amount of revenues promised by the Clerigo to the

king in case a similar concession should be made to them. The proposition was first presented to the grand chancellor, who, by this time had learned to appreciate at its value the spirit of hatred, jealousy and malice that moved Fonseca to oppose Las Casas. He refused to consider it. But the memorial found its way to Charles V., who ordered that the grant of the Indian reservation be reconsidered by the united royal councils assembled as a committee of the whole. I will let Las Casas himself describe one of their meetings.

"There was one meeting, among others, of all the councillors, who had participated in the former ones, at which the Clerigo was called. Placed in the midst of so many notable, learned and illustrious personages, he was surrounded by friends and enemies. The enemies, amongst whom were the archbishop and the members of the Indian council, feeling that they were in a small minority, listened, but spoke scarcely a word. The friends on the contrary, who were all the members of the other councils, either because they wished to satisfy themselves more fully that reason and justice stood on the side of the Clerigo, who was their protegée, or because they felt a certain relish in goading him to speak of the bad

government, which the archbishop and his men had established in the Indies, overwhelmed him with questions and objections. It was amusing to see how he gave to every question an answer and to every objection a solution, invariably ending in defense of the Indians and in exposing the injustices and wrongs inflicted on them, the murders of thousands of them, and the many obstacles placed in the way of their salvation. As the bishop and his companions remained dumb, although the philippics were addressed to them, Antonio de Fonseca ventured to say: "Reverend Father, you cannot now say that these gentlemen of the Indian council are killing the Indians, for you have taken away from them all they had." The Clerigo boldly and as quick as lightning said: "Sir, their Lordships have not killed all the Indians, but very many of them when they had them. The butchery is carried on now by private Spanish citizens, but their Lordships are their abettors." The bishop, who felt insulted, turned as red as fire in the face, although he was of a greenish-dark complexion, and said angrily: "Has it come to this that a councillor of the king, in the discharge of his duties, has to quarrel with Casas?" But the retort was

again bold and ready. "Has it come to this that Casas, who through many perils and dangers, travelled two thousand leagues to call the attention of the king and of his councillors to the fact that their tyranny and their destroying so many peoples and countries is fast sending them to hell, instead of being thanked for it, and rewarded, is forced to quarrel with the council?"

The majority of the assembled statesmen were astonished at the answer given to Antonio Fonseca, but the quick repartee to his brother pleased them and filled them with admiration at the fearless freedom and zeal of the doughty American priest. The grand chancellor gave a signal to Las Casas to withdraw from the assembly room and a vote was taken. The grant of two hundred and sixty leagues of coast for an Indian reservation and for a colony was reaffirmed and reconfirmed.

But the undaunted Clerigo was only at the beginning of his trouble, the Fonsecas and the Indian councillors had left the hall boiling with rage. In a few days every Spanish-American then in Barcelona, at the instigation of the enemies of Las Casas, got together: and out of the numerous memorials, petitions and remonstrances,

that had rained upon the Indian bureau ever since the Clerigo had been an attendant at court, they formulated against him charges and accusations, which, together with others freshly invented by themselves during their conventicles, numbered no less than thirty.

"The thirty articles against the Clerigo should find a place here in order that the reader may understand the blindness of that most reverend bishop and his clique. But, as at that time he had no thought of writing the history of those events, the manuscripts were given to the flames as soon as he thought that there would no longer be any need of them." (*Historia De Las Indias.* Ch. CXL. Book III.)

He writes, however, from memory of some of the accusations and of the answers he gave to them.

The 1st was that Las Casas being a clergyman, enjoyed canonical exemption, and could therefore steal the territory itself because not amenable to any civil tribunal.

The 2nd that he had given scandal in Cuba where he had resided several years.

The 3rd that he would or might ally himself with the Venetians or the Genoese and run away to their country with the plunder he might steal in the Indies.

The 4th that he had deceived cardinal Ximenez and had disregarded his orders.

The 30th and last was couched in the following words: "Many secret reasons which we prefer to communicate to your majesty, when it shall be your pleasure to hear them."

The charges were calumnies so flimsily veiled that they contained in themselves as good a defense as the Clerigo could have made of himself. Nevertheless Fonseca and his partisans succeeded to hold in suspense the carrying out of the decrees for the Indian reservation for several months. Fonseca caused another meeting of the general states council, to be held when the charges against Las Casas were read and discussed, in his absence. Cardinal Adrian, on leaving the council hall, met the Clerigo, and smiling said: "*Oportet respondere.*" "You must make an answer." The evening of the same day Las Casas called to see the chancellor who made the same recommendation, and requested of secretary Cobos that the documents containing the thirty objections or accusations should be brought to him. Cobos, who was a creature of Fonseca, at first refused to comply with the request, for fear that the papers should fall into the hands of the Clerigo. But the per-

sistent Gattinara would, from time to time, renew the request; and Cobos would each time put forward a new pretext for not obeying. Two months or more had passed in tergiversations, when the chancellor peremptorily commanded that the documents be produced. The secretary obeyed, but under condition, that the papers should not pass into the hands of anybody else. No sooner was it done, than the chancellor invited the Clerigo to dinner, and, after the meal, they closeted themselves into Gattinara's private office, who, drawing forth the coveted documents, said to Las Casas: "Sit down right here and answer these objections and accusations."

"It took them three months to formulate them, and it took you two months longer to get them here, and you want me to answer them in a credo? (the space of time necessary to recite the *Credo*, or *Apostles creed.*) Let me have them for five hours and you will see if I don't answer them."

"I can't do that," replied Gattinara;" "for I pledged my word not to let them go out of my possession." At this junction a message from the king called the chancellor to the royal palace. Before leaving, however, he said to the Clerigo: "Remember

that each objection is a question asked of the king. Answer accordingly. Come of a night and do your writing in my room."

Five consecutive nights found the Clerigo and the chancellor hard at work at the same desk, the latter attending to other important state affairs, the former writing his defense. At eleven o'clock they would lunch together, and retire. Las Casas answered the first objection by offering to give bond, in the sum of twenty or thirty thousand ducats, that he would appear before the king wherever and whenever summoned, which effectively answered also the third accusation that he might run away to Venice or to Genoa. The Marquis of Aguilar had proffered to become his bondsman. The reader, no doubt, remembers how Las Casas before leaving Cuba and San Domingo the first time, had taken care to provide himself with flattering testimonials from Governor Velasquez and the other colonial officers of the king, of his services to the crown in the pacification of the islands, in ministering to the Spaniards and instructing the Indians, etc. Those testimonials came into service now in effectively answering the second accusation that he had given scandal in Cuba. The fourth objection was answered equally as triumph-

antly by producing the original decrees given by cardinal Ximenez constituting the Clerigo official adviser of the monks of St. Jerome, and universal Protector of the Indians with a competent salary. Instead of disregarding the orders of the great cardinal, Las Casas demonstrated that he had endeavored to comply with the duties of his office and the spirit and the letter of said decrees. His conduct had not always worked to the advantage of certain royal councillors; hence the complaint. Las Casas, it is quite plain, in becoming a Clerigo, had not forgotten that he had been a Licenciado, or attorney at law. His answers to objections and accusations were generally so shaped as to appear more like severe indictments of his enemies than an apology for his actions. Thus he managed to incorporate in his briéf such statistics as the following; "Pedrarias, the creature and the appointee of Fonseca, had cost the royal treasury between fifty-two and fifty-four thousand ducats. Between the year 1514, when he first landed on the Darien settlement, and 1519, he had managed to rob the Indians of gold amounting to the value of over one million ducats, and to send to hell, without faith or sacraments, a half a million of souls. During all that

time not a penny was paid into the royal treasury, unless they were the three thousand ducats just brought over by the first bishop of that colony, Juan Cabedo. He also detailed the *modus operandi* of Pedrarias and his associates. Of all the ill-gotten wealth, they set aside one fifth for the king, out of which they drew their salaries, and if a balance was left over, they kept it as a reserve fund wherefrom to draw their pay, should their marauding expeditions in future fail to bring in a harvest of gold.

It is not surprising if, Las Casas' defense being read in open council general, Fonseca came out of it defeated again and the Clerigo triumphant. On leaving the meeting the courtier prelate unwittingly remarked, that it must have been the royal preachers who wrote that brief for Casas. But the chancellor retorted: "Do you then take my friend Bartolomé to be such an idiot as to beg somebody else to defend him? In my opinion he is well able to defend himself and to do much more than that."

Chapter XV.

Las Casas' Famous Audience and Speech in the Presence of Charles V.

BEFORE accompanying the first American priest once more to the Indies, something must be said of what he called "A terrible combat and the victory which he gained by the grace of God and the power of truth."

We have seen how Juan Cabedo, the first bishop of the first diocese on the American continent, had returned from Darien, the bearer of some cash, which Pedrarias had sent to the king. The early history of America mentions the names of numerous priests secular and regular, who were not only saintly in their own lives, but endowed with burning zeal for the conversion of the Indians and the reformation of the Spaniards' morals. We have already met with quite a number of such apostolic men, who succeeded, in the end in catholicizing two thirds of the western world. Not quite as much can be said of some of the

earliest American bishops, who were always the appointees, and not unfrequently the creatures of the Spanish monarchs. The baneful effects of the *Jus patronatus* or royal *placet* in the appointment of bishops were perhaps never so visible as during the one hundred years immediately preceding the council of Trent. Juan Cabedo, from a royal preacher, had been presented by the king and accepted by the Pope as the first continental American bishop. His salary was drawn from the doubtful revenues accruing to the crown from the colony on the Gulf of Darien.

Las Casas had now been at court full five years engaged in obtaining measures and decrees to free the Indians and thereby impoverish the Spaniards in America. He had in consequence become the most hated man among the settlers of all the different colonies of Whites, while all the Indians, who came in contact with the Spaniards, considered him their friend and protector.

The Encomiendas and the mines of Cuba during the years 1518 and 1519, during which the memorable and interesting events happened that I am about to relate, were yet a source of great revenue to almost every Spaniard on the island. Bishop Cabedo stopped there on his way

from Darien to Spain, interviewed governor Velasquez and, for a consideration, engaged to use his influence in having the detested Clerigo expelled from court. Shortly after his arrival in Barcelona he was invited to dinner by his old friend and quondam fellow-royal preacher the bishop of Badajoz, who had always proved one of the staunchest friends and faithful supporters of the Clerigo, during all the series of negotiations and controversies with Fonseca and his councillors. Cabedo just before the dinner hour went to meet the bishop of Badajoz at the royal palace, whence the two prelates were to go, after business hours, to the latter's house. Las Casas happened to see Cabedo in one of the royal apartments, and approaching him politely said: "As a priest of the Indies I feel it to be my duty to kiss the hand of your lordship who is a bishop of the Indies." Cabedo was then in conversation with one Samano, an employee of the court. "Who is that priest?" said he to him. "Señor Casas," answered Samano. Then turning to the Clerigo the bishop half jocularly and half impertinently remarked: "Señor Casas, I have had for quite a while a little sermon of mine prepared especially for your benefit." Las Casas promptly and

rather vexedly replied: "I have indeed for quite a while wished to hear your lordship preach, but I must inform you also that, for quite a while, I have had in readiness a couple of little sermons, which, if your lordship should consent to hear them, and digest them, will do you more good than all the gold you have brought from the Indies." The bishop added an insulting remark, to which Las Casas had an appropriate answer on his lips, when the entrance of the bishop of Badajoz put a stop to the peppery conversation. But it was renewed two hours after. Las Casas, fearing that the American bishop might prejudice Badajoz against him made it convenient to pay him a visit, calling at his house just after dinner, where he found the host and Diego Columbus engaged in a game of baggamon. Cabedo and some other guest, who had also been in America, were carrying on a conversation, the subject of which was, if wheat could be grown in Hispaniola or not. One speaker affirmed it and the other, the bishop, denied it. Thereupon Las Casas, joining in the conversation, said respectfully: "Beyond a doubt, my lord, I have seen very good wheat grow in Hispaniola. I have some grains of it with me. Here they are." He had gathered

them in the orchard of the Dominicans in San Domingo and had kept them in his pocket ever since. The argument *in re* of the plainspoken Clerigo angered the bishop, who felt discomfitted a second time, and haughtily replied: "What do you know about it? What business have you here, or at court?"

"Is there anything wrong about my business at court?" mildly replied Las Casas. The bishop came to it again: "Where did you learn how to transact court business? Where is your science and your learning for such a calling?"

Las Casas: "My learning may not be greater than you think, but I will tell you some of my business at court. One of them is to show that you have failed, like a good shepherd, to give your life for your sheep in order to free them from the hands of the tyrants, who slaughter them. Another is to show that you have been feeding and slacking your thirst on the blood of your sheep. Another still is to show that unless you make restitution of all you brought from the Indies, you have no more chance of being saved than Judas Ischariot."

The bishop feeling worsted another time, endeavored to turn the encounter into a joke, and to poke fun at his antagonist, but

the priest in dead earnest added to his other cutting remarks another. "You laugh, my lord, but you should rather weep over the pitiful condition of yourself and your flock."

Cabedo made another effort to turn into ridicule the Clerigo's seriousness and indignation by saying: "If you so desire I'll draw a few tears out of my pocket," (referring to Las Casas' exhibition of the grains of wheat) "and I will do a little weeping." But quickly came the answer: "True tears of repentance, my lord, are a gift of God, and you should earnestly beg Him to give you tears of your heart's blood, the better to bewail the miserable state of yourself and of your flock."

At this junction admiral Diego Columbus and the bishop of Badajoz arose from their game, and the latter turning to the Clerigo with an expression on his face, that spoke approval of what he had heard, put an end to the contention with a single word: "enough." The bishop went back to the royal palace chuckling over the lecture read by the Clerigo to the American prelate; and Las Casas returned to his lodgings, thinking that he had already fulfilled his promise of preaching to his lordship of Darien a couple of little sermons. Cabedo

remained a while longer in conversation with the other guest, and admiral Diego Columbus took occasion to speak very favorably of his antagonist, who, he explained, had gained great influence at court and was held in high esteem by all of the king's favorites.

The bishop of Badajoz had no sooner reached the apartments of Charles V. than he detailed to him the amusing encounter between the two clergymen from the Indies, and recited almost verbatim the little sermon of the priest to the bishop. By this time the youthful monarch, whose judgment seemed to have reached maturity before he got out of his teens, had reached the conclusion that there was something rotten, not in Denmark, but in America. He decided to acquaint himself personally with the state of affairs and to learn how his transatlantic possessions were governed. He knew already that Micer Bartolomé (the name by which Las Casas was generally known amongst the Flemish) was a disinterested priest and the fearless Protector of the Indians. He wished it understood that the simple priest would be heard in the interests of justice as well as the high dignitaries of church and state. It was therefore ordered that both the priest and

the bishop from the Indies should be summoned to appear before him three days after. And, as Diego Columbus was vitally interested, and was supposed to be thoroughly conversant with American affairs, he too was called to the royal presence. A Franciscan father had just returned from Hispaniola, and, having heard that Las Casas was laboring to obtain the freedom of the Indians, had gone to proffer his services and his help in the good work. It needs not be said that the priest and the friar became fast friends.

The court, on account of an epidemic that was then raging in Barcelona was quartered in a castle a few miles from the city. In the neighboring village there was but one church, where the courtiers were compelled to attend divine service. Under color of giving an opportunity to the plain country folk of hearing something about far away America, it was arranged that the good Franciscan should occupy the pulpit on several consecutive days. The substance of his discourses were mostly made up of descriptions of the cruel oppression to which the Indians were subjected. It reached the ears of Charles V. who ordered that the friar be summoned also to appear at the solemn audience with bishop

Cabedo, Diego Columbus, and Las Casas. The day and the hour having arrived, the three clergymen and the admiral, viceroy of the Indies, were assembled in the hall of the castle. The emperor was then only nineteen years of age, but the famous Peter Martyr could already write of him that "so great was his gravity as to appear conscious of having at his feet the universe." Accompanied by the highest court officials he entered the hall amidst profound silence, and sat on his throne. On the right of the monarch were Monsieur de Xevres, next to him Diego Columbus, next bishop Cabedo, next the Licenciado Aguirre, etc. At the left sat the grand chancellor, the bishop of Badajoz, etc., all the assembled notabilities forming an eliptical figure at one end of which sat Charles V., and facing him Las Casas and the Franciscan friar.

The chancellor and de Xevres rose from their seats, and facing jointly the emperor, bent their knees on one of the steps of the throne, and in that posture held, in subdued tones, a brief consultation with Charles, and then rising took their seats again. A moment of silence, and the chancellor in measured Latin words thus addressed the American bishop: "Right reverend bishop his majesty commands that you speak, if

you have any information to give about the Indies." The bishop rose and in an elegant preamble said that for a long time he had desired to behold the face of his king, and that now he was happy, because he had ascertained that *facies Priami digna erat imperio*, *i. e.* that the face of the king was worthy of the empire. (A reference to a passage in Homer.) Then he added that he wished to speak to the king and his councillors in private about the information he had to give about Indian affairs, and begged that all, who were not members of the royal council, should be made to withdraw. And he waited for a signal from the grand chancellor to sit down. A second consultation, accompanied by the same ceremonial, as described above took place between the grand chancellor Xevres and Charles V.; after which the measured tones of Gattinara were heard again: "Right reverend bishop, his majesty commands that you speak even if you have anything secret to say."

The prelate assured the emperor again that the things he had to communicate were secret, and that it was unbecoming they should be heard by others than himself and his councillors. He added, that his grey hairs and his position would not

permit him to engage in a controversy. Thereupon a third consultation took place and the chancellor said again: "Right reverend bishop, his majesty commands that you speak, if you have any thing more to say, because everybody here present was individually invited to sit in this council."

Then the bishop spoke as follows: "Sire, the Catholic king, your grandfather, having decided to send an expedition to make a settlement on the mainland of the Indies, petitioned the Holy Father to make me the first bishop of that colony. The expedition was very numerous, and as our provisions lasted no longer than the voyage, the vast majority of the people died of hunger. To escape a similar fate, we, the survivors, did nothing else, during the five years I spent in those parts, than steal, kill and eat. As I saw the country going to ruin, and as I knew that the first colonial governor had been bad, and that the second was worse, I decided to come and inform my lord the king. As to the Indians of the country whence I came, and those I saw in other lands on my homeward journey, I say, that they are *servi a natura* (natural slaves) etc."

Another consultation followed the speech

of the bishop and then the chancellor said: "Micer Bartolomé, his majesty commands that you speak." The following is the famous address of the first American priest to Charles V.

"Most powerful and most high lord and king. I am one of the oldest immigrants to the Indies, where I have spent many years and where, I have not read in histories, that sometimes lie, but saw with my own eyes, and, so to speak, came in contact with the cruelties, which have been inflicted on those peaceful and gentle people, cruelties more atrocious and unnatural than any recorded of untutored and savage barbarians. No other reason can be assigned for them than the greed and thirst for gold of our countrymen. They have been practised in two ways; first, by wicked and unjust wars, in which numberless Indians, who had been living in perfect peace in their own homes, and without molesting anybody, were slaughtered. Their countries, that formerly teemed with people and villages without number, have been made desolate; secondly, by enslaving, after doing away with their chiefs and rulers, the common people, whom they parcelled among themselves in Encomiendas of fifty or a hundred, and cast them into the mines,

where, overwhelmed by incredible labors, they all perish. In coming to Spain I left them behind to die whenever they come in contact with the Spaniards. And, alas! one of the originators of this tyranny was my own father, who, thank God, has not now anything more to do with it. At the sight of the injustices and atrocities inflicted upon a people, who had never harmed us, my heart was touched, not because I was a better Christian than anybody else, but because I am compassionate by nature. Hence I journeyed to these realms to inform his Catholic majesty, your grandfather. I found him in Plasencia, where he kindly granted me an audience, during which I told him the things which I am about to detail to you. He was then on his way to Seville, where he promised me that measures would be adopted to correct the evils. But he died on the way, and my petition as well as his royal will in behalf of the Indians were frustrated. I next applied to the regents, cardinal Ximenez and his eminence the cardinal of Tortosa. They promptly enacted the necessary legislation to stop the tyranny and the slaughter of so many people. But the persons selected to execute their laws, to root out the poisonous source of so many crimes, and to sow

instead the good seed, were found unfit for the task. When I heard that your majesty had come to Spain, I hastened to renew my representations to you, and had not your first high chancellor died in Zaragoza, a remedy would by this time have been found, and applied. I am to do the same work over again. But I find that the ministers of the enemy of all good are not wanting here about, who endeavor, through their selfish interests, to block my way. Sire, the spiritual interests of your soul excepted, nothing is of greater importance to your majesty than the finding of a remedy for these evils. For not one of your European kingdoms or all of them together equal in vastness and greatness your transatlantic possessions. In telling you so, I feel certain of rendering to your majesty as great a service, as mortal vassal has ever rendered to his king. For so doing I ask no reward or favor, inasmuch as my first object is not to do a service to your majesty. I desire to speak with all the respect and reverence due to as high a personage as my king your majesty. But, were I not bound to do so, as liege to my lord, I would not, forsooth, move to the corner of this room to do you service, if I did not think and know that, by so doing, I would make a pleasing offer-

ing to God, who is a jealous God, and does not share with others the honors and glory due to Him by His creatures. For His honor and glory alone, I have undertaken this selfimposed task. But I know that I cannot take a step forward without doing, at the same time, an inestimable service to your majesty. That the meaning of my words may not be misunderstood, I hereby renounce and decline any favor or temporal reward that your majesty might hereafter offer me. And should it come to pass that I, either personally or through a third party, directly or indirectly, should solicit any favor or reward for my services, I am willing to be branded as a liar and a traitor to my lord the king.

The people of whom the New World is swarming are not only capable of understanding the Christian religion, but amenable, by reason and persuasion, to the practice of good morals and the highest virtues. Nature made them free and they have their kings or rulers to regulate their political life. The bishop of Darien has told you that they are *servi a natura* because the philosopher (Plato) said at the beginning of his *politicus* that *vigentes ingenio naturaliter sunt rectores et domini aliorum*, whereas the *deficientes a ratione naturaliter*

sunt servi. Between the meaning attributed to those words by his lordship and that intended by the philosopher, there is as much difference as between heaven and earth. But granting that the bishop understood him right, the philosopher was a pagan, who is now burning in hell, and those of his doctrines only must be followed, which do not contradict our Christian morals and our Christian faith. Our holy religion adapts itself equally as well to all the nations of the world; it embraces them all and deprives no human being of his natural liberty under pretext or color that he or she is *servus a natura*, as the bishop, if I understood him right, would have you believe. Sire, it therefore behooves your majesty that you banish, at the beginning of your reign, that gigantically tyrannical system, which, horrible alike in the sight of God and man, is the ruin of the majority of mankind. This do, in order that Our Lord, who died for those people, may bless and prosper your rule for many days to come."

The foregoing must have been only the notes or substance of the speech, for he tells us that his address had engaged him, in delivering it, three good quarters of an hour.

The friar was next invited to speak. His remarks were few and his arguments but one. But he spoke, as it were, words of fire, that caused some of the bystanders to tremble and to think that they stood already before the judgment seat of God. He said in substance:

"Sire; I lived for a few years in the Island of Hispaniola. It once fell to my lot to travel with others all over the Island in order to take a census of all the Indians inhabiting it. Two years later we were ordered to perform the same duty a second time. The two censuses disclosed the fact that numberless Indians had disappeared during the two years. It is thus that countless thousands of people on that Island have perished. Now if the blood of one man (Abel) never ceased crying to God, until it was avenged, what shall not the blood of the thousands do, who having perished by our tyranny and oppression, now cry to God *vindica sanguinem nostrum Deus noster.* By the blood of Jesus Christ, and by the stigmata of St. Francis I beg and beseech your majesty to put a stop to that torrent of crime and murdering of people, in order that the anger of God may not fall upon us all."

Diego Columbus spoke last. He said briefly:

"Sire; The crimes which have been and are yet perpetrated in the Indies, of which these reverend fathers have spoken, are well known. Priests and friars, who witnessed them preached against them, and, as you see, have come here to denounce them. However much your majesty may suffer by the destruction of those people, I suffer more, because, even though all of your dominions beyond the seas should be lost, you would not cease to be a great lord and king; whereas I would be left without possessions of any kind. Hence I came to inform the Catholic king (may he rest in peace) and I am waiting on your majesty now to beg you to please look into this weighty affair, and find a remedy to these evils."

Bishop Cabedo asked to be heard again. But the chancellor, after speaking to the king, arose and said: "Right reverend bishop, his majesty commands that, if you have anything more to say, you put it in writing, and it shall be read."

Thus ended the audience. Its description gave us a glimpse of the dignified, but, to us, rather pompous ceremonial and etiquette with which royalty was want to surround itself during the sixteenth century. It is an almost literal translation of

the 148. and 149. chapters of the III. Book of *Historia De Las Indias.*

Bishop Cabedo was not, all in all, a bad man, although he was not by any means a saint. His vanity, we have seen it, would not permit him to be corrected by a simple priest. The new surroundings on the continent of America and the daily scenes of carnage he had been there compelled to witness, bewildered him, and blunted his moral perception. Perhaps for a time he allowed the crimes of the Spaniards to go unrebuked. But when aroused to a sense of duty, he left the new World to seek a remedy in the old. But on the road, and even in Spain he had made up his mind to crush the plain Clerigo with the weight of his official position and episcopal character, although the zealous priest was engaged in doing the very work he journeyed from Darien to do. His was a weak mind and he was not made to swim against the current. He had been a good friar and a good preacher, but he should never have been made a bishop, especially of a new diocese on the Western continent. He was good, when in good company, and almost wicked when in the neighborhood of worldlings. As commanded by the king, he wrote two memorials. In one he faithfully painted

the crimes of the Darien colony, and in the other suggested remedies for its reformation. He delivered them to the high chancellor on a certain occasion, when he and De Laxao had been invited to dine with him. The memorials were read after the meal, and in the course of conversation the two high officials asked the bishop: "What do you think of the scheme of Micer Bartolomé?" "Very favorably indeed," answered the prelate, "he has justice on his side, and his ways are the ways of God."

That same evening, the Clerigo, who had an inkling of the trio's meeting, paid a visit to the chancellor to see if he could smell what had transpired at the interview between the bishop and the two officials. (para oler que habia de la junta y comida del Obispo con aquellos señores sucedido.) He had not been long in his private apartments when, drawing the two memorials the chancellor said: "Micer Bartolomé, sit down in that yonder corner and read them."

Las Casas did so attentively and then called out: "will your lordship loan me a pen?"

The chancellor: "What for?"

Las Casas: "I wish to sign my name to these memorials. Did I ever paint in darker colors the ruins and the massacres in those countries?"

The bishop had evidently opened his eyes, and in Spain he looked at the doings of his countrymen in America in a different light.

Three days later, the first bishop of the American continent took sick of a fever and died humbly confessing his shortcomings and begging the blessed mother of Christ to intercede for him. His death, Las Casas remarks, attracted a good deal of attention for having happened just after his telling the truth about those evil things in the Indies, which he had almost approved by contradicting the Clerigo, and just after having spoken favorably of him whom he had treated unkindly.

We have arrived at the end of the year 1519, and, although the Clerigo's project of an Indian reservation had been passed upon and approved, the formal agreement or capitulacion, as he called it, had not yet been signed by Charles V. Las Casas was not however wedded to one plan of saving the American Indians from extermination. In fact just after having practically obtained his two hundred and sixty leagues of coast, a vaster scheme and a better one, he thought, presented itself to his fertile mind.

Diego Columbus and his half brother

Hernando were in Spain looking after their law suit with the crown concerning the grants and privileges promised to their father before the first voyage of discovery. Theirs was certainly the most important litigation of ancient or modern times. The main contention was whether Diego Columbus was entitled to the viceroyalty of the whole of America, already explored, or to be explored, and to one eighth of all the revenues accruing to the crown therefrom, or only to the viceroyalty of Hispaniola, Cuba, etc., and that part of the continent discovered and explored personally by Columbus himself. Both Diego and Hernando were humanely inclined and the friends of Las Casas. As their lawsuit had already lasted several years with no immediate prospect of its being decided in their favor, Las Casas proposed to Diego a plan, which would practically afford him as great, if not greater benefits than the viceroyalty, while it would put a stop to the extermination of the Indians and create an opportunity of converting them and of instructing them in the Christian religion. "Ask of the king," was the Clerigo's advice to Diego, "the exclusive privilege of bartering and trading with the Indians of the continent, binding yourself, as a *quid pro quo*,

to erect a fortress on every one hundred leagues of coast, for a thousand leagues, and to maintain fifty men in each one of them as a garrison, as well as for the purpose of trading with the Indians in a friendly manner. Bind yourself also to keep two or three ships, plying backward and forward, from one fortress to the other, first to provide each station at convenient intervals with stocks of goods or trifles to be given to the Indians, in exchange for their gold and other commodities of their countries; secondly, to afford you or your officers frequent opportunities of seeing, if the natives are treated with justice and kindness by the Spaniards. All the Indians of the coast, when thus treated will become your friends, and of their own accord will submit to the sovereignty of our king. When the Riparian tribes shall have been made your friends and allies, they will help you to penetrate into and explore the interior of the continent, and to erect at convenient distances, other fortresses. With an abundant supply of needles, buttons, little bells, small looking glasses and other trifles, you will soon gather up all the gold that many past generations of Indians have treasured up. After that, a few novelties from Seville will entice them to the mines to gather more.

While you, and your lay employees, will perform these comedies, I and other zealous priests and friars will quietly attend to the evangelization of the Indians."

Diego Columbus at first entered heart and soul into the plan suggested by the Clerigo, who offered to use all his influence to have it accepted and approved by the Flemish statesmen and the king. But Spain was not then worthy of being the evangelist and savior of so many people (it is substantially the remark of Las Casas) and the plan miscarried. Hernando Columbus, who, by his literary and scientific attainments, had made himself famous in Spain, and well known through Europe, exercised a controlling influence and ascendency over his brother. He insisted that Diego, in making the proposal to Charles V. should ask as one of the conditions that the governorship of the continent should be vested in perpetuity in himself, his brother, and their descendants. This was tantamount to a decision of the law suit in their favor. Las Casas acknowledged the justice of Diego's claim, but knew that it would never be granted, and therefore advised that the governorship or viceroyalty be not mentioned. Unfortunately for the aboriginal Americans, Her-

nando's counsel prevailed. The proposal was made and rejected.

An event of considerable importance in ecclesiastical history happened just before the articles of agreement between Las Casas and Charles V. were signed. The court was then at Coruña whence the king was about to sail for Germany, to be crowned emperor.

During the seven days preceding the departure, much business concerning the Indies was transacted. At one of the meetings of the entire royal council, cardinal Adrian (who became pope twenty-one months after, i. e. January 9, 1522) delivered a very solemn and learned oration, and proved that the laws of nature and of God, as well as the authority of the holy doctors of the church and the civil and the canon law required that those people (the Indians) should be led to the knowledge of Christ and to the bosom of the church by love, peaceful and evangelical ways, according to the rules layed down in the gospel by Christ himself, and not by wars and slavery. He thus condemned the conduct of those Spaniards, who had settled in those countries by ways befitting rather Mahomedans than Christians. The oration of the holy cardinal so moved the audience

that all or nearly all present subscribed to it, and praised his truly catholic doctrine. Not a soul dared oppose him; so that, there and then, it was determined that the Indians, generally speaking, should be free, and that they should be treated as free men. It was also finally decided that the Clerigo should be charged with the conversion of the Indians in his reservation, according to the method he had proposed.

The royal fleet had scarcely set sails, when the Clerigo went to pay his respects to Adrian, in whose hands Charles V. had left the reins of government of the Spanish kingdom. He found him in company of a certain Licenciado Soza, a mutual friend, who remarked on seeing him: "Here Casas, come and kiss the hand of his eminence. It was he alone who set free all your Indians."

Honesty, frankness, boldness, with the peasant as with cardinals and crowned heads, were the salient traits in the first American priest. Therefore the student of his biography will look in vain for even an unguarded word or action suggestive of adulation. He humbled himself, he begged and implored and pleaded with the great ones of the world in behalf of his Indians, but he never used adulation as means to his

end. His answer to Soza was such as might have been expected of him. With the Dutchmen he always spoke in Latin, and said. "*Ad plura tenetur Reverendissima Dominatio sua Deo et proximis, quia unicuique mandavit Deus de proximo suo.*" As much as to say: His eminence has done no more than his duty. The cardinal, who had learned to appreciate the uncompromising virtue of the Clerigo, was pleased to answer laughing: "At least you ought to pray for me." And Las Casas, who very often managed to have the last word, wishing to show how deeply he appreciated the service rendered his beloved Indians, replied: "I have formed the resolution of remaining in the service of your eminence till death, *inclusive.*" The prospects of American liberty were once more bright and promising. But, alas; no sooner was the king and his Flemish courtiers gone, and Fonseca left at the head of Indian affairs, than the freedom of the native Americans was forgotten. Nothing came of the resolution adopted, that they should be treated as freemen. However, Las Casas gives the bishop of Burgos credit for treating him thereafter "very well, thereby showing that, after all, he was generous and noble hearted,

considering that the Clerigo had heretofore given him considerable annoyance."

The enemies of the Protector of the Indians played their last card against his project of colonization and evangelization of his protegées when they began to ridicule it. Certain exconvicts of the tribunal of the inquisition were made to wear a peculiar attire, with over it certain badges indicative of their condition of penitents.

The attire, the badges, and the exconvicts themselves were known in Castile as *Sanbenitos*. The opponents of the Clerigo delighted in referring to his knights of the golden epaulet as Sanbenitos.

Chapter XVI.

Las Casas sails for America to settle with his Knights of the Golden Epaulet, on the Venezuelan Coast.

FROM Coruña governor Adrian, Fonseca, the royal councils and Las Casas went to Valladolid, where all the necessary decrees were drawn and addressed, with commendable expedition, to the royal officers in the Indies to enable the Protector of the Indians to carry out his project of colonization and evangelization. With the decrees in his pocket, the Clerigo went to Seville, gathering on the way a number of emigrants from the agricultural classes sufficient to make the beginning of the settlement on the American continent. The knights of the golden epaulet, the reader must remember, were to be selected from among the Spanish settlers on the West Indian Islands. In his native city Las Casas was compelled to borrow considerable sums, perhaps from his relations and friends, to pay for his own and the emigrants' passage. For his two trips to and from America and

his residence at court for several years had left him penniless. Charitable people of wealthy Seville provided him with an abundance of toys and trifles to be given as presents to the Indians to make them approachable and friendly.

On the 25th of November, 1520, Las Casas sailed for his adopted country full of buoyant hopes, but not without some misgivings that his countrymen, the Spanish-Americans, might once more block his way to his freeing and evangelizing, some at least, of the Indians. While the Clerigo crosses the Atlantic, for the fifth time, I invite the reader to witness the tragedies that are meanwhile enacted on his Indian reservation.

DOMINICAN COLLEGE

"*Un pecador de hombre* (the scoundrel of a fellow) by the name of Alonso de Ojeda, who had settled on the island of Cubagua, where the pearl fisheries were located, wished to procure for himself some slaves, as others had done before him, to employ them to dive for pearls. With some other worthies like himself he undertook a pilgrimage down the coast, to look for *Cannibals!* to enslave them by peaceful ways, if possible, but sword in hand if necessary. With the connivance, and perhaps authorized by

the alcalde of the island, they boarded a small boat, that had been used in the fisheries, and made for the little bay of Chiribichi, situated some twenty miles south, which the Dominicans had named *Santa Fé de Chiribichi*, where their convent was located. There were then in the house only two of those servants of God, a priest and a lay brother, as the others had gone to Cubagua to preach a mission to the Spaniards, who needed it as much as the Indians. The marauders jumped on shore with as little fear, as if they were entering their own houses, because the Friars had been living in that neighborhood five years, and the example of their holy lives had made the inhabitants of the surrounding country so gentle and tractable, that a Spaniard could, with perfect safety, travel alone twelve or fifteen miles in the interior loaded with Castilian trinkets, and return with the wealth of the country in his possession. Ojeda and his companions made straight for the convent, where the Friars received them with great rejoicing; first out of kindness and hospitality, and secondly because, accustomed as they were to live with only Indians as their neighbors, they were always glad to meet

with some of their countrymen. A lunch was served and a pleasant chat was in progress, when Ojeda, rather abruptly, asked to see the chief or cacique of the Pueblo. His name was Maraguay, a brave, shrewd and reflecting man. He had not always been pleased with the conduct of the Spaniards, but, having in his power, as hostages, the inoffensive friars, he frequently closed an eye and pretented not to see certain illdoings of his bearded neighbors. The Pueblo was separated from the convent by a creek or bayou. Maraguay, having been sent for by either the friar or Ojeda himself, promptly put in an appearance. The captain and two of his underlings took the cacique aside, and, as he called for writing materials, the Father in charge of the convent brought them to him, not in the least suspecting, that, in so doing, he would hereafter arouse the suspicions of the chief. Then Ojeda asked the Indian if it was true that in the interior, back of the Pueblo, there were some caribs or cannibals. The cacique who knew full well what the consequences would have been, had his answer been in the affirmative, surmising the truth, that the visit of Ojeda and his companions was for the purpose of looking for a pretext for attacking him or

his neighbors and kinfolks, answered fiercely, "that there were no cannibals thereabout," and then arose to depart. They tried to placate him, but the Indian nursed thereafter his indignation and anger.

The marauders proceeded ten or twelve miles farther down the coast to Maracapan, an Indian village over which ruled a chief, who, some time before, had paid a visit to Hispaniola, where he was entertained by a Gil Gonzales, whose name he adopted in sign of appreciation of the hospitality received. He was as wise as Maraguay and had not always admired the ways of his white neighbors of Cubagua. Nevertheless he found it convenient to treat very hospitably the Spaniards, who would chance to land on his dominions. Neither did he fail to entertain Ojeda and his companions. The captain told Gil Gonzales that his business at Maracapan was to buy of some native farmers living a few miles in the interior, a considerable quantity of corn or maiz. In fact he and most of his men proceeded to the country and readily agreed with some of the inhabitants on the price of fifty sacks of the grain and on the compensation to be given to fifty men for carrying it to Maracapan. Evidently the carriers suspected no treachery, and on

their arrival at the Pueblo threw down their loads at a certain spot indicated by the Spaniards and sat upon them waiting to receive their pay. But of a sudden they found themselves surrounded by the Christians, who held drawn swords in their hands. Of those who endeavored to flee some were wounded, some killed, and thirty-five of them, rather than be cut to pieces, allowed themselves to be brought on board the ship. The news of the capture spread with incredible rapidity for hundreds of miles around, and, at a meeting of the neighboring caciques, it was decided that, not only Ojeda and his companions, but the friars also, who always sheltered and treated as brothers those wicked countrymen of theirs, should be put to death. They suspected besides that the paper given by the priest to Ojeda at Chiribichi must have had something to do with the dastardly treachery, they had witnessed. Strange to say, Ojeda did not set sail at once. Perhaps he thought that Gil Gonzales would side with him rather than with the Indians of the interior, and his conduct, on the following Sunday, cannot be explained otherwise. The Indians had noticed that on that day of the week the white men did not work

but rested and amused themselves. Hence no outward sign of warlike preparations was given in the neighborhood during the week, but when Sunday came, and Ojeda and a majority of his followers went ashore for a walk, they were surprised while crossing the streets of the Pueblo, and perished, captain and all, at the hands of the Maracapans. The Indians even tried to capture the vessel, but failed. The two friars of Chiribichi were allowed to live for a week longer. But the following Sunday the lay brother was called, by the ringing of the monastery bell, to the door, where he was felled and killed, and the priest, who had already vested for Mass had his head split in two by an ax. The convent was fired and the horse, which had for the past five years been used in tilling the land, was also killed.

Las Casas landed safely in Porto Rico November 11th, 1520. There he heard the harrowing tale of the massacre of the Dominicans. Their mission was situated within the boundaries of his reservation. There a convent had already been built, quite a number of acres were in cultivation, and a beautiful orchard had been planted, the trees of which were just beginning to

bear. Naturally the Clerigo had built great hopes on the Dominicans of Chiribichi. In fact the half christian Pueblo, with its goodly number of converts and catechumens, would have proved, from the beginning, a powerful lever in his gigantic undertaking. He did not however loose heart, and it being known in Porto Rico that an expedition was being fitted out in San Domingo for the purpose of avenging the death of the Dominicans by fire and sword, he resolved to wait and try to stop it on its way to the continent. A difficult task, as the Spaniards coveted nothing more than a reason or a pretext for war, in order to load their ships with prisoners to be captured and held as legal slaves, who could be disposed of on the public market. The flotilla arrived in Porto Rico in a few days in command of Gonzalo de Ocampo. Las Casas produced the royal decrees granting to him the exclusive jurisdiction on that part of the continent, and forbidding any body else from landing on those shores. He argued that therefore he alone had power to punish the slayers of the friars. Ocampo answered that his business and his duty, as captain of that expedition, was simply to obey the orders of his immediate superior officers, the royal Audiencia of San Domingo, pro-

testing however the greatest reverence for the documents carried by the Clerigo. Ocampo proceeded to the pearl coast to make slaves, and Las Casas to San Domingo, to free those, who had been previously enslaved and stolen from that same coast and were now held in bondage on the Island.

The decrees granting to Las Casas an almost unlimited territory, rich in gold and other precious metals, had a good commercial value, and he had no trouble to borrow money in Porto Rico. With five hundred dollars in gold he bought a vessel, on which he made his passage to San Domingo in Hispaniola, and which he intended to use later in the service of his missions. The laborers were left behind in batches of four and five and were intrusted to the care of the planters on the Island.

In the colonial capital Las Casas did not receive much of a welcome, as he was held by nearly all the white settlers as their greatest enemy. In good time he presented his decrees to Diego Columbus, who had returned to America, and to the royal Audiencia. The documents were published with due solemnity, with trumpets sounding, and in the presence of the assembled citizens. The Clerigo did not fail to summon

the authorities of San Domingo to recall, as soon as possible, the flotilla that had been sent, in charge of Ocampo, to punish the people of Maracapan and Chiribichi alleging that the killing of the Dominicans was justified by the insolence and the crimes of Ojeda, and that, if any punishment was to be inflicted, not they, but he alone was competent to apply it in virtue of the royal decrees that gave him exclusive jurisdiction over the territory. "We will look into the matter," replied the judges: and quite a number of days were spent in parleying, in order to give time to Ocampo to do his work.

A calker from Biscay had settled in San Domingo and was doing a good business in the exercise of his trade. By investing his savings in stock companies, whose main business was to kidnap Indians in order to sell them as slaves, he had accumulated quite a little competence, and was now the owner of two ships of his own. When he heard of Las Casas, and of his intention to free all the Indians, thereby making his occupation unprofitable, "*No le peso menos que si viera al diablo*," i. e. it pleased him about as much as if he had seen the devil. The calker and other interested parties began to whisper it around that the Clerigo's

vessel was unseaworthy and beyond repair. The Audiencia promptly appointed a committee of experts, the chairman of which, of course, was the calker himself, to examine the craft. It was condemned, for the purpose, Las Casas thought, of blocking his enterprise. Not only he lost the five hundred dollars in gold, but found himself unable to proceed to his destination. The fifty well-to-do settlers destined to become white knights of the golden epaulets were yet to be found.

Meanwhile shiploads of Indians began to arrive in San Domingo from the pearl coast, and were being sold under the very nose of the Protector of the Indians. The poor priest frothed, wept, threatened the authorities, who listened impassively. These however feared that he might do them serious damage, as the Clerigo was known to be a determined man, who had never failed to obtain from the king what he asked for, while they, having no commission to do so, had undertaken that war of extermination at the expense of the crown. The wiley judges of the Audiencia knew also full well that the grant which the priest carried in his wallet, while it threatened to destroy their principal source of income, the kidnapping of Indians, was

in itself a very valuable one. In fact his Indian reservation, besides the pearl fisheries, which paid them very fat dividends, was known to have within its boundaries numerous gold mines. They decided therefore to take advantage of his embarrassing position, and by apparently coming to terms with him, endeavor to appropriate to themselves a controlling interest in his enterprise. All the high functionaries of the crown in the Island agreed to propose to him a plan that would enable him to carry out his scheme of colonization. A stock company was to be formed and the stock was to consist of twenty-four shares, six of which were to become the property of the king, to compensate him for the expenses of fitting out the expeditionary flotilla; six were to go to the Clerigo and to his fifty knights of the golden epaulet, three to viceroy Diego Columbus, one of each to the four judges, one to the royal treasurer, one to the general auditor, one to the general agent, and one to each of the two secretaries of the Audiencia. The flotilla in charge of Ocampo was to be placed at the disposal of Las Casas, but only one hundred and twenty men, who were all to work for a salary, were to be left to man the vessels, while the remaining one hundred and eighty

were to be discharged. When the plan was presented to him, the Clerigo, promptly accepted it, and thus rendered himself liable to serious criticism. It seems in fact difficult to understand why he should have associated himself with men who were actuated by exclusively worldly interests in a scheme, the sole purpose of which was the salvation and evangelization of the Indians. True, he alone was charged in the royal decrees with their execution, and he alone was to remain at the head of affairs. Nevertheless he ought to have foreseen that men, who put their cash in the enterprise, might be expected to claim a right to interfere in the management of the company's business. However the strictest moralist will scarcely find anything radically wrong in the acceptance of the assistance (they called it with that name) proffered by the crafty politicians. Writing forty years after, the Protector of the Indians assigns the following reason for his action. "Seeing that, for the present, there was no other remedy and that there was no prospect of his being able to work out his scheme without their assistance and coöperation and seeing also that meanwhile the land was being made desolate and its inhabitants enslaved, the Clerigo made answer that he wished to see the company organized."

He must however have signed the articles of agreement (capitulacion) with some misgivings, for he says that the document was not unlike certain superstitious invocations, that begin with God, and end with the devil. Under duress he signed a document containing some clauses, which he did not approve and which (he says so himself) he never had the slightest idea of observing. For so doing, history will ever condemn the first American priest. If we suppose that another clause recited or implied that nothing in the agreement should be understood as binding him to do anything against the laws of God, as was probably the case, it would yet be true that this action of his was not in keeping with the man's general character, although it would acquit him of any moral wrong. My opinion is, that, in this instance, he stretched somewhat his conscience in striking a bargain, whereby to buy Christ, whom he saw daily crucified in his Indians. Writing in decrepid old age he lays a good portion of the blame at the door of the colonial officers in the following lines.

"Great was indeed the blindness and ignorance, if it was not malice, of those gentlemen, in believing that the absurd and horrible conditions would be complied with

by the Clerigo, whom they held as a good and disinterested Christian, and who was ready to die in order to free the Indians and help saving them. As to the Clerigo, he accepted them to extricate himself from his vexatious position (*por redimir su vejacion*) fully determined to carefully look after their interests in every way not sinful or prejudicial to the Indians, or incompatible with the main object of his mission as given to him by the king. He intended to allow the bartering of European trinkets for gold all along the coast, to endeavor, by winning ways and by presents, to induce the Indians to fish for pearls on the little Island, and to utilize, for their benefit, any other honest source of wealth that the land might afford. Thus the returns for their investments would not have been by any means little. But they were satisfied with nothing less than to see their houses, plantations and mines filled with Indian slaves, than which, nothing was further in the Clerigo's mind." We shall see however, that he did not shirk his share of responsibility, and that having discovered, at a later period, his error, he bewailed it bitterly.

The company provided Las Casas with two good vessels, and loaded them with wine, oil, vinegar, cheese, and all other

provisions, as well as with the munitions necessary to the little fortress, which he intended to build on the first settlement to be made. He sailed from San Domingo in July 1521, and after touching at the island of La Mona, where he loaded a large amount of cazabe bread, made for Porto Rico, to pick up the emigrant laborers he had left there, on his way from Spain. But, lo and behold! they had all disappeared, and had joined certain expeditions gotten up for the purpose of kidnapping Indians in the islands and on the continent. He could do no better than proceed without them to his destination. Sail, sail away, nothing daunted, thou hero of the gospel, while I'll tell of the work of thine enemies to block thy way.

Ocampo had arrived in time at the little port of Maracapan. Chief Gil Gonzales at the sight of the flotilla went out in his canoe to see what was wanted, but, fearing the vengeance of the white men, kept at first at quite a distance. There appeared on board the flag-ship but three or four men, who, by signs and gesticulations, pretended to desire only some information about that country, its name etc. Ocampo's ruse consisted in creating the impression, that his company had come direct from

Spain, and not from treacherous Ojeda's country. Five years residence by the side of the Dominicans had taught Gonzales some Spanish, and drawing near Ocampo, he gave the desired information in broken Castilian. The sight of wine and wheat-bread had enticed the Indian alongside the ship, when one of the sailors, an expert swimmer, darted from under cover, sprang into the canoe, grappled with Gonzales and stabbed him to death.

Then the three hundred Spaniards landed, and with those of the Pueblo, whom they did not massacre, filled the ship and sent them to Hispaniola. Las Casas saw them sold in San Domingo, whither he had gone to free those of their countrymen, who had met a similar fate before. It would not have been prudent to attempt a settlement at Paramana or Chiribichi and the Clerigo landed four miles further south, at Cumana, where the French Franciscans had founded a convent at the same time that the Dominicans had established theirs at Chiribichi. The members of the community had heard from Ocampo of the grant of that country to the Clerigo, and, when they saw him landing, went to meet him singing the *Te Deum* and the antiphon *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.* I leave it to the

reader to imagine the rejoicing at the meeting of the good friars with the devoted secular priest. The latter admired the extensive orchard with its oranges and other luscious fruit. The convent stood on the banks of the river Cumana, a few hundred yards from the seashore.

Ocampo was found busy with some of his followers (the others were engaged in pillaging the country around, and in making slaves) building a town, which he had called New Toledo, a mile or so further up the river. The occurrences of Paramana were well known to the Indians for hundreds of miles around, who, frightened by the presence of the marauders, had left the neighborhood. The scarcity of provisions, the monotony of their occupation of slaughtering or enslaving Indians, and the hard labor required of them to build Toledo had so dissatisfied the men under Ocampo, that threats of mutiny were heard on all sides, and, as Las Casas put it, even if Toledo had been called Seville, they would never have consented to make it their home. The news therefore that the country was to be turned over to the Clerigo, and that whosoever desired to return to Hispaniola, might do so, was welcomed. With sufficient provisions, given them by Las Casas, they

sailed for San Domingo, and only a few of them remained as a sort of body guard in his excursions through the country, a few servants, who probably had followed him from Spain, and the crews of the two vessels on which he had come to Cumana, took the place of the knights of the golden epaulets, and were to be the only helpers of the Clerigo in the work of civilizing the inhabitants of a territory that proved to be seven hundred miles wide and between three and four thousand miles long. His first occupation was to build a large warehouse or shed, in which to store his provisions. By means of an Indian convert, whom the friars had named Mary, he next went about reassuring the natives, by telling them that the king of the Christians had sent him as an ambassador to inform them, that they, at last, would have nothing more to fear from the white men. He distributed little presents, carefully watching at the same time, that his own men should not give occasion to the least scandal. The history of nearly all the missions among the heathen, undertaken by the Catholic church in the last several centuries, tell the same tale. The greatest impediment to their success is the bad example of the christian layman. The re-

fuse of christian communities are frequently found side by side with the apostles on the frontiers of civilization, the latter to extend its limits, the former to retard it. We have seen the work of the Spaniards of Cubagua at Maracapan, headed by Alonzo de Ojeda. The Franciscan convent was nearer to Cubagua than Maracapan; and, as the island afforded no potable water, the pearl fishermen were in the habit of coming frequently to fetch it in barrels from the river Cumana. From these almost daily visits arose scandals without number. Now it would be a Spaniard insulting an Indian woman, next day a young man bartering his liberty, for months at a time, for a bottle of Castilian wine, and again drunken brawls among the Indians themselves, or between white and red men, the effects of trading gold for the coveted red liquor.

Las Casas had promised to build some fortresses on the different settlements contemplated, and he concluded that the mouth of the Cumana river afforded a desirable location for the first one. It would answer the purpose, not only of protecting the convent against any possible insurrection of the Indians, but, if occasion arose, of teaching also some manners to the Spaniards

of Cubagua, who could not conveniently get drinking water anywhere else. Las Casas had with him a quarryman and stone cutter, who was put to work at once on the new fortress at a salary of eight gold dollars a month. But the worthies of Cubagua took the hint and either by persuasion, bribe, or hard cash, soon enticed the man away; and the Clerigo was left in the impossibility of using what artillery he had brought with him. Meanwhile the intercourse of the Spaniards with the natives produced worse effects daily; drunkeness especially was on the increase, and, while in a state of intoxication, the Indians had already more than once used against each other, and against the Spaniards, poisoned arrows. Conviction forced itself at last, in the mind of the Protector of the Indians, that their evangelization was impossible, while these conditions existed. The very thought of it made his heart bleed; but in the bitterness of his anguish he even resolved at times in his mind how he could abandon the enterprise altogether. He had assured the Indians, in the name of the king, that they would be molested no longer, and, under his very eyes, his countrymen did the reverse of what the king had decreed. The articles

of agreement called for a judge, who should have resided on the reservation to administer justice. But nowhere is a judge, magistrate or justice of the peace mentioned as having come to Cumana with Las Casas. He went one day in a skiff to see the alcalde, who resided in Cubagua. His pleading, entreating, threatening the anger of the king, if the Spaniards were allowed to further trespass on the territory of his grant, availed nothing. Things went rather from bad to worse. Bitter experience taught the priest, that, if it took five or six years to have the necessary laws enacted to protect the Indians, it was even more difficult to enforce them at a distance of seven or eight thousand miles from the seat of the central government. He and his friend, the superior of the Franciscan community, Juan Garceto, reached at last the conclusion that something should be done as the danger to their own and their companions' lives was growing daily. It was agreed that the king alone or the royal Audiencia at San Domingo could put a stop to the outrages of the Spaniards of the Island of Cubagua, and that their authority should be appealed to. But, who should journey to Hispaniola, or even to Spain, to make the necessary representations? At

first Las Casas spurned the very thought of leaving the little settlement without a head and entirely at the mercy of the Cubaguan outlaws. The country would soon be pillaged by the whites, and the Indians would seek vengeance on his associates. Many conferences were held with the Friars, at which Garceto invariably insisted that the Clerigo himself should go. Daily the Clerigo, after celebrating Mass to implore the divine assistance, would meet Garceto and the other Friars, to consult together, discuss and debate on different plans. But invariably the meetings ended with a remark from Father Superior, "that the Clerigo himself should go." A couple of vessels were then loading salt for Hispaniola scarcely a league from Cumana. At the very last moment, when one of the vessels was ready to set sails, Las Casas decided, against his own better judgment, to follow the Friar's advise. Taking with him only his wearing apparel and some books and manuscripts, he departed for San Domingo. Minute instructions were, however, given in writing to Francisco de Soto, who was left in charge of the settlement as its commanding officer, under no circumstances, to allow the two vessels to get out of sight of the Cumana convent,

but to have them ready to sail at any time, should an emergency arise necessitating the removal of men and goods. This De Soto was a Spanish nobleman, who had come from Spain with Las Casas to look for a fortune.

The salt-laden ship on which the Clerigo had sailed, had scarcely disappeared on the horizon, when he thought that his chance had arrived. Hastely drawing out of the ware-house a lot of Castilian trinkets and trifles, he loaded them into the two ships, and sent them in opposite directions to barter for gold. The contingent of white men at Cumana consisted of perhaps forty individuals, a majority of whom were required to man the vessels and only ten or twelve were left with De Soto and the Friars. The Indians decided to follow the example of their brothers of Maracapana and Chiribichi, and do away, from their shores, with the white men, Friars and all. The day for the massacre was set. But faithful old Mary felt in duty bound to warn her former benefactors of their impending fate. The friars managed to find out the very day on which the assault was to be made. Fourteen guns were gotten ready and an effort was being made to organize a defense. But the powder was found to be

wet and unserviceable. After a sleepless night, De Soto went reconnoitering early in the morning, to see if any unusual commotion or warlike preparation was taking place in the Pueblo, situated a gunshot away, on the seashore. At sunrise three of his men were busy spreading out some of the powder to dry, when a swarm of Indians in ambush fell upon them and killed them. Their comrades, warned by the savage warcry, took shelter in the warehouse, and De Soto, though wounded by a poisoned arrow, managed to join them there. One of the doors in the building opened into the orchard which was enclosed by a high fence or palisade, and was traversed by a deep irrigation-ditch or canal, which the Friars had opened to facilitate the watering of their plants, vegetables and fruit trees. The savages thirsting for more blood, and unable to reach new victims endeavored to set the ware-house on fire. Meanwhile the besieged made their exit into the orchard, and creeping along side of the tall fence reached the irrigation-ditch, crawled into a canoe, that was moored there about, and, protected by the embankment, made their way to the river. The frail craft was drifting rapidly towards the sea,

when an old lay brother was heard calling to them from a cane-break to be taken on board. They saw him standing on the river shore a short distance behind them, and made frantic efforts against the current to reach him, but made little or no progress. The good old man, seeing that he endangered the lives of all on board, waved to them to save themselves, and to leave him to his fate. They reached the sea, and had made half the distance to the ship that was loading salt, when a pirogue was spied, loaded with Indians in hot pursuit. The blood thirsting savages were armed, and, as theirs was the lighter boat, the distance between the two crafts was visibly becoming smaller and smaller. Escape on water was impossible, and the Spaniards made for the shore followed by the Indians. The land about there was grassless and treeless, but overgrown by a thicket of gigantic cactuses, frequently met with in Central and South America, the thorns of which are as stout and as long as shoemakers' awls. The white men, protected by their clothes, managed to find hiding places, whereas the naked natives dared not follow them. Three days past, however, before the last of the

famished and forlorn fugitives, with their garments tattered, and their bodies clotted with blood, reached the ship. De Soto alone was missing, who, when seen last, was laying in the shade of a cactus. A skiff was manned to look for his body, but he was found alive, though perishing from thirst rather than from the wound inflicted by the poisoned arrow. No sooner was water given to him than he died in a paroxism of hydrophobia.

The survivors sailed with the cargo of salt, and reached San Domingo safely. It is presumed that the two vessels, owned by Las Casas, which De Soto had sent on a gold hunting expedition, must have also reached a port of safety, as he states that, of all those who had followed him to Cumana, only four had been killed, besides the lay brother. The Indians not only fired the ware-house and the convent, but cut the trees in the orchard, killed the animals and left not a vestige of that former abode of peace.*)

*) The authorities of San Domingo sent some time after an expedition to Cumana, terrorized and pacified the Indians, reestablished the pearl fisheries of Cubagua and built a fort on the very spot where Las Casas had begun his. On the famous little island a town was built and called New Cadiz, which lasted as long as the pearl fisheries and was then abandoned.

We parted company with the Clerigo, while he was journeying to Hispaniola. His former associates, and the Friars, arrived in San Domingo long before him. The captain of his freight-ship, who had little experience of those southern waters, lost his reckoning and after wandering for many days, landed at last at the port of Yaquimo, more than two hundred miles east of San Domingo. Two months had been wasted in trying to sail back, against the gulfstream, to the city, when Las Casas went ashore, made for the town of Yaguana, and thence travelled on foot to San Domingo, a total distance of some two hundred and fifty miles. A couple of servants had accompanied him from Cumana, who shared with him the long tramp. They were nearing their journey's end, when one day the Clerigo stopped to eat and rest, and, after the meal, went to sleep under a tree. Some travellers from San Domingo happened to pass by, and the priest's servants asked them, if they had any news from San Domingo or the old world.

"None," they answered, "except that the Indians of the pearl coast have killed the Clerigo Las Casas, and all the members of his household."

"As to that," replied the servants, "we are living witnesses that it is impossible."

A dispute as to the truth of the news was in progress, when Las Casas awoke and overheard it. The information stunned him, and dazed him, and he says that he then felt as if he had just emerged from an abyss. The surviving Friars had arrived in the city from Cumana, and, as frequently it happens in similar cases, the catastrophe had been exaggerated. The Clerigo had not been seen or heard of, and was given up for dead. It was welcomed news to many, who were glad to be ridden of a severe censor, and of the man, who blocked their way to wealth and agrandisement.

As the first American priest regained the full use of his senses, it flashed through his mind that it had all happened as a just punishment from God, for having chosen as his associates, men, who worked, not for the glory of God or the salvation of souls, but for their own selfish interests. He even feared or believed that he had offended God, in attempting to use means so different from those that had been adopted by our Lord and his apostles in evangelizing the nations Why had he not followed the plan, he had first proposed to himself, and chosen fifty good Christians for his companions and colaborers, even though these would have had in view some temporal

gain, while working to spread the gospel and save souls? God, in his mercy, must have looked at his good intentions, rather than at his work; for he preserved him from an imminent and cruel death. He ends the narrative of his disastrous attempt at colonization as follows: "The Clerigo proceeded on his journey in great anxiety and sorrow, to learn more minutely the particulars of what had happened. Some friends of his came to see him and to console him, offering to loan him four, five or more thousand dollars, if he wished to make another trial of the enterprise. If their motive was the glory of God and the salvation of souls, or rather temporal gain, God only knows, who alone will decide it on last judgement day. I will conclude the life of the Clerigo by saying that, as soon as he arrived in San Domingo, he wrote to the king all that had happened, and then determined to wait for an answer, because he had not the means then to travel personally to the court, although friends were not wanting who would have helped him with a loan of money. And, had he gone, he would have succeeded, no doubt, in preventing the evils and destructive catastrophes, that followed each other in those lands, in having the men punished, who had blocked his way and caused the rebel-

lion of the Indians, because the king had then returned from Spain and with him the influential gentlemen, who had backed him before. In fact, as they heard what had happened, they wrote him to come back, and that he would be favored by the king more than he had been before. Pope Adrian wrote him also; but the letters arrived at a time when he could no longer dispose of his own actions. Had he had the means, and gone at once to Spain on his arrival in San Domingo, perhaps he could have put a stop to the tyranny, by which the Indians were then, and have since been oppressed. But, indeed God did not put it in his heart to do so, either because, according to the decree of his inscrutable divine providence, those people (the Indians) were destined to perish, or because the cup of iniquity had not yet been filled by our own nation. He waited for a few months for an answer, during which the Dominican Fathers were almost his only associates. His time was mostly spent in the company of one of them named Domingo *) de Betanzos, a very virtuous and

*) Father Domingo de Betanzos was one of the first Dominicans, who went to Mexico. He was elected bishop of Santiago de los Caballeros (old Guatemala City), but declined the mitre. In 1535 he was elected first provincial of the Dominicans in Mexico.

pious man. The good Father often tried to convince the Clerigo, that he ought to become a Friar, saying that he had labored long enough in behalf of the Indians, and that, inasmuch as his Cumana venture, though good in itself, had proved a failure, it was a sign that it was not God's will he should continue in similar undertakings. The Clerigo advanced many objections to his entering a religious community, among others that it was but proper that he should wait for an answer from the king, and see what his wishes were. "But Señor," said then the good Father warmly, "what if you should die in the mean time? who should then receive the orders of the king or his letters?" The words made a deep impression on the heart of the Clerigo Casas, who ever after thought more and more seriously about his vocation. He ended by considering himself already dead to the world, should the letters come. He asked for the religious habit and got it.

As the news spread that the Clerigo had become a Friar, there was general rejoicing; in the Dominican convent as well as throughout all the Indies. In the convent, because its inmates were glad to see their beloved friend converted to their manner of life, and into a member of their

community ; and outside of it, because the worldlings were glad to see him buried in a cloister, who had proved the most powerful obstacle to their dishonest conduct in the accumulation of temporal wealth. But, to the disappointment of many, he rose again, by the will of God, it appears, to prevent some of their evil doings, and to point out and make it as clear as daylight, that the state, in which many of them lived, was dangerous, and that theirs was a lethargic sleep and inconceivable blindness, which prevented them from seeing, that sins, more grievous than any committed since the fall of man, were not sins at all. He had already entered the novitiate when letters came from cardinal Adrian, who had become Pope, and from the Flemish gentlemen, advising him to come back to court, and assuring him that they would favor him as much as ever, or more. But the superior of the convent, not to trouble him (*porque no se inquietase quiza*) did not show them to him . . . . And here we must stop speaking of the Clerigo, now Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, for a few years, during which he seems to have been asleep. But there are many more things to be said of him, and we will write them at the proper time if God will prolong our

life." (*Historia de Las Indias*, book III. chapter CLX.) *)

It is scarcely probable that the Protector of the Indians, who lived until July 1566 enjoying good health and the full possession of his faculties, should have suddenly abandoned the greatest literary work of his life. As Remesal, his earliest biographer, tells of certain events, that happened as late as 1533 as being spoken of in the *Historia de Las Indias of Las Casas*, it seems to be evident, that we do not possess all of the important historical work, which ends abruptly with the year 1521. Among his many titles to the gratitude of posterity, the first American priest deserves especially to be called the Father of American history. Let us hope that some lucky student may soon unearth the IV. and the V. book of *Historia de Las Indias*, which must be buried in some library of Seville or Madrid, or possibly in

*) God did prolong his life five or six years, but, of all that is known to exist of his great Historia, not a word more is found about the Clerigo or Fray Bartolomé. The *Historia de las Indias*, as we have it, ends with the III. book and with these words: "And may it please God, that in this current year 1561 the council of the Indias may be free from it. (Ignorance and blindness.) And with this imprecation to the honor and glory of God, we end this third book."

Paris, where some of his other writings were found. Meanwhile I regret being compelled to continue the thread of his life, without the *Historia de Las Indias*, which heretofore has been my main guiding star.

CHAPTER XVII.

Las Casas a Friar.

LAS CASAS entered the Dominican novitiate in 1521, and was admitted to make his vows in 1523, being then 49 years of age. Hardships he had seen in Cuba, while following the expeditionary forces of Velasquez, and during his disastrous attempt at colonization in Cumana. But as a student in Salamanca, as the administrator of his father's interests in Hispaniola, and, later, as a miner and landed proprietor, he may be said to have lived the first part of his life in comparative affluence, as a Spanish Hidalgo, or gentleman.*) A Dominican convent in Hispaniola and the austere requirements of the rule must have had few attractions to flesh and blood. Nevertheless it is not improbable that a disgust for a deceitful and treacherous

*) In the VIII. Chapter of the V. dome of his *Historia Apologetica*, Las Casas tells us that he owned a plantation on the shores of the river Yuna, in Hispaniola, the produce of which were worth $100,000. "Tuvo labranza de pan de la tierra, que valian, cada año, mas de cien mil Castellanos."

world, which had caused the failure of his Cumana venture, contributed as much to his determination to enter the monastic state, as the arguments of good Friar Betanzos. The biographers of Las Casas are unanimous in rejecting as unhistorical the insinuation of Oviedo, that the Clerigo availed himself of the shelter and protection, which the cloister afforded him to shield himself from the consequences of his disastrous undertaking. And indeed nothing could be imagined more unconsonant to the character of the first American priest, than cowardice or pusillanimity.

Very little is known of Las Casas' life during his novitiate and the four years immediately following it. The transition was radical and violent. From an eminent man of the world and adviser of kings, the uncompromising champion of the liberty of the American Indian, and the promotor of gigantic schemes of colonization, the American priest placed himself under the direction of a Master of Novices, and, for a few years, his life was spent in the performance of religious practices and in study. His name was seldom mentioned outside the convent walls. He had died to the world, but soon to rise again. The first years of his religious life were a training

school, a *palestra*, in which the athlete strengthened and further fitted himself for his task and unfinished mission.

In those ages of faith civil law was based on moral theology, and canon law on the scriptures. Hence a diploma in both civil and canon law could not be obtained from a university, without a study of theology and the scriptures sufficient to entitle the graduate to holy orders. But a regular course of dogmatic and moral theology Las Casas had never made. In becoming a member of the order of Friars Preachers in holy orders, the first American priest to comply with the rule of the order, applied himself, during the first years of his religious life, to a systematic and serious study of the ecclesiastical sciences. Those were perhaps the happiest days of his life, which were spent in the quiet seclusion of the Dominican convent of the town of San Domingo. It was there that he witnessed the death of the founder of the Dominican order in America, Father Pedro de Cordova, which occurred on the 28th of June, 1525. The short life and death of that holy man seems to have exercised a wholesome and powerful influence on the Protector of the Indians, who makes frequent mention of him in his writings always in terms

denoting profound admiration and veneration. *)

In the CCIV. chapter of his *Historia Apologetica* he says of him: "The first ecclesiastic to go to that province (of Chiribichi) for the purpose of spreading the catholic faith, and drawing its people to their creator, Jesus Christ, was a holy and learned man, and a graceful preacher, in whose person shined eminent prudence and many other virtues. It was he, who first brought over and founded in these Indies the Order of St. Dominic, which he preserved in strict religious discipline, truly leading it back to its primitive observance."

Las Casas spent about five years in making his novitiate and in the study of the religious sciences. But when he entered anew the active ministry, we find him profoundly versed in civil and canon law, in moral and dogmatic theology, intimately acquainted with the conditions, civil, moral and religious both of Europe and America. No mean orator and withal an able dialectician, he was one of the best educated men of his times. His short monastic seclusion served to highten and intensify his zeal, his faith and his enthusiasm. Such a man could not long remain unknown and un-

*) Pedro de Cordova died at the age of about 43.

heard in a cloister. It is known that as early as 1527, he was already superior of a community of his order. "Three leagues west of the Vega, there is the port of La Plata, and adjoining it, is the town of that name, and on a hill overlooking it, a Dominican convent, where I began writing this history during the year 1527."

A letter, written in 1533, by the judges of the supreme court of Hispaniola to Philip the second, then crown prince of Spain, tells us that Las Casas had been, but was then no longer prior of the convent of La Plata. It says: "Father Bartolomé de Las Casas, well known to your royal council of state, was once prior of the Dominican convent at Puerto de Plata. That prior caused some scandal or uneasiness in that town, and spread certain opinions among the inhabitants concerning the Indians, that caused them to entertain some scruples of conscience."

This document, discovered by Don Antonio Fabié, the latest biographer of Las Casas, shows not only that he was superior of that convent shortly after his novitiate, and theological studies, but that once more, he considered it his duty to protect the Indians with all the impetuosity and fixedness of purpose, that seems to have been

the most salient trait of his character. A slaveholder of La Plata was at the point of death, and Las Casas was either called, or went uninvited, to hear the dying man's confession. The penitent was warned, that he would be damned, unless he set free his Indian slaves. The consequence was, that a new will was there and then drawn, in virtue of which the unfortunate natives became free men. Only then was the parish priest, who meanwhile had been waiting in an adjoining room with the blessed sacrament, admitted to the sick man, to administer the holy viaticum. The letter of the judges tells us also how his connections with the convent of La Plata were ended. "After the man's death," they say, "he took possession of the property of the deceased, thus despoiling the natural heirs, and disposed of it, as he thought proper. To avoid similar inconveniences, we asked his superior to remove him to this convent, (of San Domingo) where he is at present."

Evidently the first American priest had learned his duties well, and forced the sick man to restore his illgotten wealth, offering himself as the intermediary for the restitution.

His endeavors to reduce to practice the

doctrine, that the Spaniards in America were bound to restitution of all the wealth acquired through and by means of Indian slavery, will afford some interesting reading. It is enough to say here, that from the spring of 1514, when he preached to the Spaniards of Cuba, that they had no chance of salvation, while retaining Repartimientos of Indians, to the hour of his death, the Protector of the Indians never wavered in his opinion for an instant.

The scruples of conscience of the people of La Plata were caused by the sermons of Las Casas, and by his private conversations. In his possession was a copy of Father Montesino's address at San Domingo, and the style of his discourses is not difficult to imagine. He had not forgotten his title of Protector of the Indians, and the Spaniards of Hispaniola soon found out that the old Clerigo, now Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, who, they thought, had been buried in a cloister, had rather suddenly come to life again. Nor was his voice to be heard only in an obscure settlement of that West Indian Island.

I have already mentioned that the Franciscans, as early as the year 1510, had built a convent at Vera Paz, in the province of Xaragua. There they had adopted, so to

speak, the son of a neighboring Cacique, educated him, and baptized him with the name Henrique (Henry). Don Henrique, or, as he was generally called, Henriquillo (little Henry) married an Indian girl, known by her christian name of Doña (lady) Mencia, like her husband, of aristocratic lineage. The young couple and the Indians of their Caciquedom were given in encomienda to a certain unmarried young gentleman, by the name of Valenzuela. It is not said how, but Henriquillo had come in possession of a mare, which was his own individual property, and was valued by its owner more than all his other possessions. Valenzuela appropriated the animal to himself, and later abducted the Indian's wife as well. Henriquillo complained of the cruel wrong, and got a severe whipping for his trouble. He then appealed to the civil authorities of a neighboring town, and was there threatened with severer punishment, should he further complain of Valenzuela. After having been kept under surveillance for a few days, the educated Indian, as a last resort, appeared before the audiencia in San Domingo, and there lodged a complaint against his would-be master. But he got nothing better than a friendly letter of recommendation to the civil authorities,

who had placed him under arrest, which, as a matter of course, afforded him no redress. But Henriquillo had not received his education in vain. He fained satisfaction at the treatment received in San Domingo, as long as his people were at work in the mines or on Valenzuela's plantation. But as soon as these were allowed to return to their mountain homes, in the neighboring sierra to make a crop for their own sustenance, Henriquillo accompanied them, and there resolved to resist any attempt to force him or his braves to return to work for the white man. He contrived to provide himself with a supply of Castilian weapons, lances, swords, etc., and drilled his followers to handle them to advantage. Having heard of the chief's doings, Valenzuela, accompanied by ten other Spaniards went to fetch him back, by force, if necessary. The erstwhile servant, on seeing his master, politely advised him to go home. His words aroused Valenzuela, who attempted to capture Henriquillo. A general fray ensued, during which two Spaniards were killed and their leader taken prisoner. But happily for Valenzuela the Indian had learned from the Franciscans to practice even the heroic virtue of forgiveness. Strict orders had been given by the Indian

general to his followers, under no circumstances, to harm the white men or their property, except in defending their own and their persons. The chief set his prisoner free, contenting himself with the words: "You should thank me, Valenzuela, that I spare your life. Go home and come back no more. Beware."

Henriquillo did not neglect his quartermaster department for his handful of brave followers. In many of the wildest and most secluded nooks of the sierra he tilled numerous patches of ground many miles apart from each other. His vigilance against surprises or ambuscades would have done credit to a Napoleon. He slept but a few hours each night, with a body guard on each side of him, personally doing picket duty the rest of the night and during the day.

Meanwhile the news of Valenzuela's defeat had spread throughout the island, and reached the offices of the Audiencia at San Domingo. Eighty soldiers were sent to apprehend the outlawed chief, or to kill him. Henriquillo, who was warned of their approach, first decoyed them to pursue him through the mountain forests for several days, and when he felt assured, that the Spaniards were famished and ex-

hausted, gave them battle, and routed them. The fame of his victory brought him many more recruits from among runaway slaves, who were ready to risk life and all in order to breathe once more the air of freedom. These too were drilled and disciplined.

The problem of this Indian insurrection, as the Spaniards were pleased to call it, had become serious, when Father Remis, who had been the teacher of Henriquillo, and was then superior of the French Franciscans, offered to make an attempt to induce him to surrender peacefully. He sailed to the southern part of the island, where the chief was thought to be. There he was met by some of the latter's scouts, who, obedient to their leader's orders did not harm him, but contented themselves with stripping him of his habit, which they brought to camp. The Friar's apparel and a note from him, fetched the chief to the shore, where the old teacher was treated with the utmost courtesy. But to the pleadings of the teacher the pupil answered in rounded Castilian periods, reciting the tyranny of the Spaniards, the massacre of his ancestors, the thefts of Valenzuela, etc., and nothing came of the interview.

Ramirez de Fuenleal had come to Hi-

spaniola in 1527, as chief justice of the Audiencia, and as bishop of San Domingo. The rebellion of Henriquillo being by this time well known in Spain, the judge-bishop had received instructions to crush it. An army was recruited to carry them out, which was also defeated. Letters came a year later to the Audiencia, insisting that the rebellion be put down at any cost. To make matters worse, two other Caciques, Ciguayo and Tamayo, encouraged by the successes of Henriquillo, had also taken to the mountains: but unlike the hero Christian chief, they lived by rapine, and many were the murders with which they were charged.

The judge-bishop at last put on his thinking cap, and decided to call in consultation Las Casas, the Protector of the Indians, who, it was known everywhere, had more influence and a greater ascendency over the Indians, than any one else in all America. He profferred cheerfully to make a second attempt to induce the chief to surrender peacefully. But the president of the Audiencia represented that the mission of Father Remis had ended in failure. To which Las Casas answered:

"My lord, how many times have you, and this Audiencia, endeavored to bring that man to the king's obedience by war?"

"Many times", replied Fuenleal; "nearly every year an army has been raised and sent against him, and we shall have to raise more until he dies or surrenders."

Las Casas: "And how many times did you try to conquer him by peaceful ways?"

Fuenleal: "As far as I know, only once."

Las Casas: "Why then did you get tired of peaceful ways so easily, and tried them only once, and adopted on the contrary the harsh and difficult ways of wars that have always proved futile? I have a mind to recommend this affair to God very earnestly; and I don't think it possible that He will not encourage those ways of peace and meekness with which He has charged us to treat our enemies. With the permission of my superior and yours, I propose to go to the Cacique, and I trust in Our Lord, that I will succeed in fetching him at the feet of your lordship, or, at least, to have with him an understanding about a *modus vivendi*, by which an end shall be put to this plague, of which the island has been suffering for the past ten years."

Don Henrique (the Spaniards had learned to speak of the chief respectfully, and addressed him as Don) and his followers had, no doubt, heard in their boyhood days of

their friend Behique, who had never proved untrue to an Indian. When therefore Las Casas made his way alone to Henriquillo's mountain fastnesses, he was received very respectfully by his spies. Having heard that the Protector of the Indians was approaching, Henriquillo designated a shady spot as their place of meeting. And now we behold a scene worthy of Buonarotti's pencil. There sat the noble Christian chieftain, the son of a dethroned ruler, who, strong in the justice of his cause, had defied the power of Charles V. for full ten years; and by his side Behique, the man of God, the friend of the Indians. "You must lay down your arms," the priest had come to tell him, "for unless you shall forgive your enemies from the heart, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." To which Henriquillo must have answered: "Must I bend my neck to the despoiler of my father's people? Must I forgive them, who oppressed, starved and murdered my kinsfolks? Forgive them, who made of my country, erstwhile a garden spot in midocean, a mining camp, a slave market and a graveyard, where the unburied bones of my ancestors are now bleaching?" "Unless you forgive your enemies from the

heart, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." This must have been the sum total of the arguments of the first American priest with Henriquillo. Nevertheless a treaty of peace, so to speak, was there and then signed, by the terms of which the Indian acknowledged the sovereignty of Spain over his country, while not only amnesty for himself and his followers was insured, but freedom to live unmolested in their mountain pueblos without a master.

Las Casas returned to San Domingo, and the news of his successful mission became a source of rejoicing all over the island. Henriquillo doubted not the word of the Protector of the Indians. But, would his countrymen carry out in good faith the treaty of peace between the white and the red man just signed by their ambassador? He had therefore required of Las Casas that he should cause to be formally ratified the articles of agreement by the proper and highest authorities in the island.

A certain San Miguel, one of the oldest settlers, who had come to Hispaniola with Christopher Columbus on his second voyage was chosen by the Audiencia to be their plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary to sign and ratify the treaty of

peace. The old gentleman, to give himself and his mission great airs of importance, thought proper to go and look for Henriquillo accompanied by a squadron of one hundred and fifty armed men. The Cacique was notified by Las Casas of his coming. But fearing treachery at the hands of that large body of men, Henriquillo thought proper to make the Spaniards travel for several days over the mountains to look for him; and having satisfied himself that, tired as they were and hungry, no harm could be done by them to himself and his men, designated at last a place of meeting. This was a mountain gorge on the sides of which arose two rocky perpendicular cliffs, the summits of which were within easy speaking distance of each other.

During the years of insurrection there had landed on the southern coast of Hispaniola (how, when, or why, it is not said) a cargo of gold from the continent, which had fallen in Henriquillo's hands. He agreed to deliver the precious metal to San Miguel at a certain spot on the seashore, where he caused to be gathered also an abundance of provisions and some presents, wherewith to entertain the Spaniards. To that place the meeting on

the cliffs (the Indians spoke from one and the Spaniards answered from the other) was adjourned. A few days later San Miguel was on the seashore surrounded by an even greater military contingent. Henriquillo, who more than ever feared treachery, was not there alleging as a cause for his absence an indisposition. His men however delivered the gold to the Spaniards and entertained them hospitably. San Miguel returned to San Domingo fully convinced of the good faith of the Cacique, but without having fully accomplished the object of his mission. This happened in 1529. It was only three years later that, through a second mediation of Las Casas, the famous Henriquillo was induced to formally acknowledge the sovereignty of Spain and to surrender. The reader will be told how.

CHAPTER XVIV.

Third Voyage of Las Casas to Spain in Behalf of the Indians.

WE have reached the year 1530. The most stirring events in the history of the American continent had taken place since the first American priest had donned the white habit of the Dominicans. Hernando Cortez with a handful of followers had landed on Mexican soil, and with the help of native allies, the Tlascalans, the traditional enemies of the Aztecs, had taken possession of the ancient empire of Montezuma in the name of the king of Spain. In 1530 the standard of Charles V. floated from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from northern Mexico to Panama. The inhabitants of this empire, as large as the half of Europe, had been Encomendados, that is partially enslaved by the Conquistadores. From his convent of Hispaniola Las Casas watched the current of events, which threatened the extinction of the native race on the continent, as well as on the islands, but was powerless to stem it.

Francisco Pizarro had already had the first glimpse of the Peruvian shores and had partly heard and partly guessed, that beyond them lied a vast and rich empire. In 1528 he journeyed to Spain, to obtain on the Pacific a grant similar to that which Las Casas had obtained, ten years before, on the Atlantic. He returned to America during the first part of 1530 with the grant of the viceroyalty of two hundred leagues of coast and of the corresponding interior, which he hoped to add to the already almost limitless dominions of the Spanish crown. Las Casas, who since the end of his novitiate, had kept in touch with the doings of the Spanish court, and with the epoch-making events that followed each other in rapid succession in America, thought of the natives of Peru, and decided to take the necessary steps in time to prevent the poisonous tree of the Repartimientos being planted on Peruvian soil. With the consent, and perhaps by the command of his Dominican superiors, he undertook to cross for the fifth time the Atlantic in behalf of the Indians.

Fonseca, his old antagonist, had died, and better men than he were now managing Indian affairs. Within less than six

months he obtained from Charles V. the necessary legislation to prevent the natives of Peru from sharing the sad fate of those, who dwelt in New Spain or Mexico. In so readily obtaining the object of his journey he was backed by the influential Dominican order, many of whose members occupied the highest ecclesiastical and civil dignities. His successful mediation between the Audiencia of San Domingo and the Cacique Henriquillo must also have added to his influence at court. He had proved that the old Protector of the Indians, better than any one else, understood the character of the aboriginal Americans, and their needs. He was no longer a simple Clerigo, but the prior of a Dominican convent, versed, not only as before in canon law and jurisprudence, but in moral and dogmatic theology. The courtiers, his old friends, looked upon him no longer as the simple and untitled, though zealous and bold priest, but as upon the holy and learned theologian of an order, who counted those among its many thousand members by the hundred, who taught in the most renowned universities, sat in councils of state, worked in artists' studios, and preached in the most celebrated pulpits in christendom. Al-

though young in his religious profession, he was already favorably and prominently known in the order. While in Spain, the first American priest was invited more than once to preach to the court. The reader may imagine the themes of his sermons.

Las Casas returned to Hispaniola with an imperial decree addressed to Francisco Pizarro, and to Almagro his partner, forbidding them as generals of the expeditionary forces then in Peru, and their inferior officers, under no circumstance or for any reason whatever, to enslave the natives of that country. They were also forbidden to parcel them into Repartimientos; and were commanded to allow them to enjoy their freedom and their possessions as any other free vassal of the king in Spain or elsewhere.

Las Casas returned to Hispaniola at the end of 1530 or during the early part of 1531; and his fellow friars, who were then holding the first American provincial chapter, gave him a hearty welcome. But the most trying part of his journey was yet to be made. He was on his way to deliver to Pizarro and Almagro the royal decrees, which he had brought over from Spain.

The success met with in obtaining them perhaps inspired him with new hopes of

ultimately accomplishing, through the council of the Indies, for all the Indians in America, what he had obtained, he thought, for those of Peru. In fact it appears, that, during the short time he spent at his convent of La Plata between his return from Spain and his setting out for Peru, he addressed a memorial to the councillors dated the 6th of June, 1531. It is a forcible and fearless exposition of the tyranny and oppression of the American natives, and might be mistaken for an apostolic sermon preached to the gentlemen, who, from far away Spain, managed and sometime mismanaged American affairs. It covers twenty-two octavo pages of ordinary print. I'll give of it only the opening paragraph.

"My Lords. Christian charity, which should never pause or rest through our life pilgrimage, zeal for the house of God, and the sorrow I feel in witnessing the wasting away of his majesty's dominions (for whose service God knows that I would not shirk any labor whatever) have spurred and compelled me to put aside other occupations, in order to write to your lordships the selfsame things which I labored for six consecutive years in repeating by word of mouth, in years gone by, before the royal council, of which some of you were then

members. I mean the endless miseries, the unspeakable tyranny under which the unhappy heathen people of these yet unexplored countries have been groaning. Not a day of rest, no respite, no amelioration have they seen; on the contrary their sufferings are constantly on the increase. As I have done in the past, I propose to end my life's journey, even to give it, if occasion offers, in attempting to find a remedy for these evils, knowing that it would be but a small price to be paid for what I ask. I am likewise impelled to follow my course by the numberless trials, to which the kingdoms of Spain and all christendom are subject to in these troublous times of ours. Are we not afflicted by horrible and bloody wars and other intolerable visitations? Who knows, if by healing the wounds, from which mankind is bleeding in these parts, the ailments of the entire mystical body of Christ (the church) would not be healed? . . . ."

Father Francisco de San Miguel was elected prior of the Dominican convent in the City of Mexico by the chapter mentioned above. Las Casas sailed for Vera Cruz in his company, and, on his arrival at the capital of New Spain, became for a time the guest of his travelling companion.

Here he had the pleasure of meeting once more his old friend Father Domingo de Betanzos, who had passed from Hispaniola to Mexico in 1526. Many Dominicans had by this time settled in the Indies, and in Mexico alone were to be found over fifty professed Fathers. It seems that the newcomers were not all made of the same metal as those, who had first settled in Hispaniola and at Chiribichi, like Father Pedro de Cordova, Montesino, Betanzos etc. In fact on the arrival of the new prior the community of Mexico City received him coldly, and much dissatisfaction developed about his election. Las Casas, during his first visit to Mexico, employed his zeal and his fraternal charity in smoothing the way for Father San Miguel.

By the end of 1531 the Protector of the Indians must have heard that Pizarro and Almagro were about to set foot on Peruvian soil. It was of the greatest importance that the decrees, forbidding them to enslave Indians, should reach them, before an opportunity be afforded them of engrafting the poisonous seed of the Repartimientos on the empire. Las Casas therefore lost no time in setting out for Central America, whence he intended to sail for Peru. He was then sixty years of age. Let the

reader reflect on what a journey from Mexico City to Nicaragua meant in those days. It had to be made partly on horseback and partly on foot, a distance of about a thousand miles; and the traveller's subsistance had to be drawn from what the natives and a few white settlers could give him here and there. His travelling companions were Father Bernardino de Minaya, an old gentleman venerated and highly thought of by the Dominicans, and a young man, just ordained, named Pedro de Angulo, who, for quite a number of years became Las Casas' companion and assistant. They were bound for the Port of Realejo, now known as Corinto, in Nicaragua, and their route was through Santiago de los Caballeros, the first capital of the then province, and now republic of Guatemala. A Dominican convent had been built there a few years before, but it had been abandoned. The three travellers lodged in it during their short stay in the town. The entire white population turned out to meet and to welcome them headed by the parish priest, Francisco Marroquin, who, three years later, became the first bishop of Guatemala. But the enthusiasm of the planters and miners abated considerably, when it was discovered that one of the three

Dominicans was the renowned Las Casas, the most hated man in America. They were, however, begged by Father Marroquin, who might be called the father of the Church in Guatemala, to settle there and to reopen the convent, because there was in those parts extreme need of evangelical laborers. But their important mission to Peru precluded their accepting the invitation. Las Casas proceeded to the Port of Realejo, where a ship was then loading provisions and ammunition destined for the Pizarros in Peru. Breathing not a word about the decrees that were locked in his wallet, for fear of being refused passage, if their contents were known, Las Casas sailed for Tumbez in the neighborhood of the present city of Guayaquil, where Pizarro and Almagro were then encamped.

CHAPTER XIX.

Las Casas in Peru.

He returns to Nicaragua and founds a Dominican Convent; then goes to Hispaniola and back to Nicaragua and thence to Guatemala.

IN 1521 the herald's trumpet had sounded in the plaza of San Domingo, and the public crier had read aloud to the citizens the decree ordering all Indian slaves from the continent to be turned over to their Protector, who was to embark them for and set them free in their native countries. But the Indians' shackles were not then broken, in spite of the decree of powerful Charles V. Pizarro's little army is now on parade at Tumbez. White habited Las Casas approaches and produces the decrees forbidding the enslavement of the Peruvian natives. The herald's trumpet sounds again; the will of the Spanish monarch is proclaimed, and a profession of obedience is made from the generals down to the private soldiers. The student of Peruvian history knows that as soon as a serious effort was made to enforce this, and other

more important decrees to insure the freedom of the Peruvians, rebellion, civil war, and anarchy followed.

Las Casas' object in going to Peru was not only to deliver the king's decrees, but also to found a Dominican convent in that southern country. The famous Vicente Valverde (who subsequently became the first bishop of Peru) and Father Reginaldo de Perazza had followed the expeditionary forces of Pizarro and Almagro from the beginning, and met Las Casas on his arrival at Tumbez. The five Dominicans, Las Casas, Pedro de Angulo, Bernardino de Minaya, Vicente Valverde and Reginaldo de Perazza, conferred together and decided that the time had not yet come to build convents in Peru, as but little of the country was as yet in possession of the Spaniards, and the Peruvians showed no disposition to submit to them without war. Las Casas therefore and his two companions availed themselves of the first opportunity to return to Nicaragua where I find them already at the beginning of 1532.

Diego Alvarez de Osorio was the bishop of the extensive new diocese of Leon in Nicaragua; and instructions had lately reached him from Spain authorizing him to establish a Dominican convent to help him

administer his vast jurisdiction and evangelize the natives. The Nicaraguans, ever since the advent of the white men (in 1524) had shown a disposition to embrace the Christian religion, and to learn its tenets. The emperors of Mexico had, in centuries gone by, subjected them to their rule, and had introduced the Aztec language, with which the prominent men of the country were now acquainted. It happened that Pedro de Angulo had familiarized himself with it, during his several years' residence in the capital of Montezuma. It was therefore possible to enter at once into relations with the Indians, and to begin the work of evangelization. At the same time the three Dominicans proved a Godsend to the bishop, who was thus enabled to carry out at once, and without expense, the instructions just received from Spain. Las Casas set to work without delay to build the convent of St. Paul in the episcopal city of Leon, and to learn the language of the common people of the country.

We must now return from the Pacific to the Atlantic, to San Domingo, the home, for many years, of Las Casas. Chief Henriquillo had lived peacefully the past three years in his mountains, and no Spaniard

had been harmed either by him or his followers. But he was absolute lord of his own domains; neither had the Audiencia ever thought it advisable to look for the lion in his lair. But Charles V. was not the man to tolerate an *imperium* in *imperio*. Every man within his dominions must be made to acknowledge him as his liege-lord. A certain licenciado Cerrato had lately arrived from Spain to succeed Fuenleal, as chief justice or president of the Audiencia. One of his first cares was to devise means to induce Henriquillo to formally acknowledge the sovereignty of the Spanish crown. The history of the past fifteen years had convinced the licenciado that the object in view might best be accomplished by peaceful ways. He therefore wrote to Las Casas ordering him to come at once to Hispaniola, because the king's service required his presence there.

The Protector of the Indians left the works of the Missions and the building of St. Paul's convent in charge of de Minaya and of some other Fathers, who had lately arrived in Nicaragua, and set out to traverse the American continent a second time, on his way to Hispaniola. His way, however, was not this time through Mexico, but through Honduras,

on the Atlantic coast of which, either at Port Caballo or Trujillo, a ship had been dispatched by licenciado Cerrato to fetch him to San Domingo. On his arrival there, he was given a hearty welcome, very unlike the one they had given him when, as a Clerigo, he was about to start for Cumana. Cerrato had called Las Casas to Hispaniola principally to ask him to use again his good offices with Henriquillo to induce him to submit peacefully to the sovereignty of the king. A second time we see the Protector of the Indians climbing the mountains in the company, this time, of Father de Angulo, to look for the outlawed chief. He made quite a stay with him, and two months had past before a word was heard of him in San Domingo. The judges of the Audiencia had begun to feel uneasy, lest his mission had failed, and harm been done to him and his companion; when one day he made his appearance unheralded in the city, in the company of Henriquillo himself. The same people who for years had hated and dreaded the Cacique, now received him as it were in triumph, and feasted him for several days.

This episode in the life of the first American priest ended with his accompanying Henriquillo to the offices of the Audiencia,

where all the promises and guarantees, previously given by Las Casas, were solemnly confirmed and ratified. To the credit of the Audiencia they were kept faithfully. Henriquillo was allowed to retire to the pueblos over which his ancestors had ruled as lords of their tribe, and the best of feelings existed ever after between the king's officers of San Domingo and the Indian chief. Strange to say, the latter became a warm supporter of Spanish rule in his country.

We have reached the end of A. D. 1533. The news of Pizarro's conquest of an empire as large as that of Mexico and richer beyond comparison, had been received in San Domingo, and the name of the intrepid and lucky conquistador was on everybody's lips. Las Casas' mission in Hispaniola having been happily accomplished, he must start for the southern Eldorado, attracted, not by the shining metal, but by a burning zeal for the salvation of souls. He must be there and see for himself, if the decrees of Charles V. guaranteeing the freedom of the natives were faithfully observed. Cerrato and the San Dominguians provided him with everything necessary to the long journey. As the idea of establishing Dominican con-

vents in Peru had never been abandoned but only postponed, before leaving Hispaniola Las Casas petitioned for some Fathers, who should become the first apostles of Peru. The request was granted; and four priests sailed with him, one of whom was Luis Cancer, favorably known, not only for his sanctity, but for the important services he had heretofore rendered his order.

If their route was through Mexico and Guatemala, or, as appears more probable, by the way of Honduras, is not clear. But by the middle of 1534 we find Las Casas again in the convent of St. Paul in Leon, Nicaragua. He was then busy making preparations for his voyage to Peru. In charge of St. Paul's convent he left three of the four Fathers, who had come with him from Hispaniola, and selected as his travelling companions Luis Cancer and Pedro de Angulo. By this time Panama had become a busy port, through which and the isthmus of the same name communication was kept open between the Pacific and the Atlantic, between Central America, Peru and Hispaniola and Europe. It naturally had also become a sort of entrepot and shipping point for goods and men to and from the Pacific coast. Opportunities for travelling from Panama to Peru

were not wanting, but several months would sometimes intervene between the sailing of one and another ship from the port of Realejo for Panama. A very small vessel was, however, about to make the passage, and the three friars sailed on it. The tiny craft fought for days and weeks against the powerful currents of those seas, and the crew was undecided between endeavoring to force their way to Panama and returning to Realejo. It was agreed to let chance reconcile their differences of opinion. Lots were drawn and blind fortune decided that they should proceed on their way to Panama. But storms compelled them to return at last to Realejo. Las Casas' earliest biographer, Antonio Remesal, tells us that, in his *Historia de las Indias* (in that part of it which is lost to us) the Protector of the Indians describes pathetically the frightful sufferings, which he and his companions had to undergo during that second futile attempt to establish a convent in Peru. From Realejo they made their way back to the convent of St. Paul in Leon. Meanwhile Marroquin, who had just been made bishop, had heard of Las Casas' disastrous expedition to Peru, and wrote him a long letter representing how his vast diocese was almost destitute of

evangelical laborers, it having within its confines but one other priest besides himself. At the same time, said he, there stood in his episcopal city of Santiago de los Caballeros a Dominican convent already built, but deserted, while the province of Nicaragua suffered from no such dearth of priests or friars. The letter ended by inviting Las Casas and earnestly begging him, now that two attempts at establishing Dominican convents in Peru had failed, to come to Guatemala and become his colaborer in the evangelization of that important province. The first American priest, who had learned to appreciate the earnest character of the Guatemalan prelate during his first visit to his episcopal city, could not resist so reasonable an appeal. In company again of Luis Cancer and Pedro de Angulo he left Nicaragua and set out for Guatemala, arriving there about the first of January 1535.

Chapter XX.

Las Casas in Guatemala.

IN Santiago de los Caballeros the three famous Dominicans were again compelled to learn an entirely new language, the Quiché. It was radically different from the Aztec, but happily bishop Marroquin, who had mastered it, had already composed a grammar and, under his direction, the friars soon learned it sufficiently to communicate with the natives.

Las Casas remained in Guatemala the whole year of 1535 and the best portion of 1536. The Indians thereabout were intelligent, docile and easily amenable to the Christian religion. The friars' time was divided between ministering to the Spanish settlements, and evangelizing the natives. During his residence in Guatemala Las Casas wrote his short treaty called *De Unico Vocationis Modo*. As the title of it shows, it treats of the method to be employed in converting the Indians. It never was printed and no copy is now known to exist. But Remesal preserved

for us quite a lengthy extract in its original Latin. He says of the work: "The same father Bartolomé de Las Casas had also, some years before, written a book which he entitled *De Unico Vocationis Modo*, in which he proved that through the redemption of Christ Our Lord and Head of the Church, all those who were predestinated of all nations and tribes, were to be called and invited into one body; that no nation in the whole world had been excluded from participation in the effects of redemption; and that out of every nation some individuals, many or few, are in fact predestined to eternal life. It followed that this doctrine must be understood as applying to the people of the new world. He proved next that the multitude, gravity and turpitude of the sins either of a whole people, or of individuals do not constitute an evidence of their not being predestined even if they intend to persevere in their sins, and although they be found to be naturally fickleminded, lazy, vain, timid, untruthful, inconstant, fierce and cruel. Furthermore it is not possible that a whole nation, people, city, or village be possessed of so little intelligence as not to be able to receive the gospel, although it be true

that the natural intelligence of one people is superior to that of another. He showed that necessarily the same difference existed among the many different peoples of the Indies, but that they were generally intelligent above the average of mankind, and that, if any were found deficient in this respect, they were in a very small minority . . . .

They are temperate in eating and drinking, and because they trouble themselves little about temporal affairs, and live an easy-going life, the passions, which cause sorrow and unhappiness, are not abnormally developed in them. They are ingenious and skilful in the mechanical arts, and much of their handiwork is a cause of wonder to the white man. They have already given signs of their proficiency in the fine arts.

He writes next and explains the only natural way by which the predestined ones must be called to, and brought over to the faith of Jesus Christ, Our Lord, and to the Christian religion, which calling is incipient predestination itself. His thesis was: The one and only way appointed by divine providence to teach men the true religion, is that which, through reason, convinces the intellect,

and through kindness and charity, moves the will. This applies to all men irrespective of their religious errors and their moral corruption. He proves his thesis in thirty-six long paragraphs, 1st by natural reason, 2d by the examples of the Holy Fathers of the old and of the new testament, 3d by the examples of Christ himself, Our Redeemer, 4th by the precepts he gave to his apostles, as to how they should preach the gospel, 5th by the examples of the apostles, 6th by the weighty authority of the doctors of the Church, 7th by the practice of the primitive Church, 8th by the decrees of many of the Roman pontiffs.

Then in eight other paragraphs he paints, in the same elegant and eloquent style, the opposite method of spreading the gospel by compelling converts to accept the faith by force of arms. In the two last paragraphs he lays down the following conclusion founded on the authority of God and man:

Wars waged against the heathen to subject them to the sovereignty of the Christians in order that they may be prepared to accept the faith and the Christian religion, or, in other words, in order to remove the obstacles that prevent them from accepting it, are rash, of doubtful efficacy, wicked, and tyrannical."

It may be said with truth that all the writings of Las Casas, which are very voluminous, have the same object in view, namely to prove directly or indirectly the foregoing conclusion, and the proposition that naturally follows from it, that the enslavement of the Indians by means of Repartimientos or otherwise, is unjust and tyrannical. Not unlikely the preparation of *De Unico Vocationis Modo* was begun by the author as early as 1528 or 1530 while he was prior of the convent of La Plata, in Hispaniola. Certain it is that the themes of his sermons there consisted frequently in inveighing against the wars that were constantly waged against the natives, and in defense of their liberty. From Remesal it is known that Las Casas had put in writing his ideas concerning the conversion and government of the Indians in 1530; and this biographer takes it for granted that said ideas had been suggested to the council of the Indies in a memorial presented during that year, while the Protector of the Indians was in Spain. The good seed planted then was at last about to bear fruit.

About the middle of A. D. 1536 there arrived at Santiago de los Caballeros a royal decree concerning the conversion and

government of the Indians. It gave minute instructions as to how many and what days were by them to be kept holy ; on how many and what days the converts should fast, and what religious observances they should practice. *)

The Spaniards of Guatemala were, no doubt, familiar with the notions of Las Casas on the subject of slavery, and of the Repartimientos. Some of them must even have read circulating copies of his *De Unico Vocationis Modo*. But they looked upon them as preposterous and impractical theories of a pious but fanatical friar. They smiled and indulged in an occasional joke at the expense of good Fray Bartolomé, and continued to deal with the natives as if they were scarcely human beings. Among them were many well meaning men, like the thousands of well meaning men, who, less than a century ago, saw no harm in buying, for so much cash, black human flesh just

*) While travelling in Southern Mexico some years ago, the writer noticed, posted prominently at the entrance of several country churches, and printed in large type, a catalogue of feasts and fast days to be observed by the aboriginals, with alongside of it a longer one of the feasts and fast days to be kept by the whites. I did not know then that the difference in these church laws originated with the first American priest.

landed on the streets of New Orleans or Charleston from the coasts of Africa.

But when the decree arrived from Spain, commanding that serious efforts should be made, by the settlers in general, to convert the Indians into citizens and Christians, it caused no little commotion in the colony, especially because it was known that the bishop (at that time) and practically all the clergy were of one mind on the subject. The decree was on everybody's lips and much criticism was indulged in against Las Casas, who was known to have been the prime mover in bringing the visionary theory into vogue. They bandied with and challenged him to convert the red man with nothing better than words and holy exhortations. Surely, they said to him, if you be in earnest, do not fail to undertake a task that promises so much for the honor and glory of God and of his Church, and so much credit to yourself. If you succeed, we shall acknowledge ourselves unjust soldiers, lay down our arms, free the Indians, and make restitution of what we have acquired by war. A secret conviction lurked in the minds of some of them, that, should the friar make the attempt, he would either fail or pay with his life for his foolhardiness and rashness. In either case they

would be freed from the meddling censor who could no longer pester them with his sermons and pamphlets. The first American priest did not hesitate to pick the gauntlet thrown at his feet. There was, not far from Santiago de los Caballeros, the *land of war*. It was a mountainous country cut up by deep cañons and precipitous ravines, which were easily turned into raging torrents by the almost daily tropical rains. Although all the surrounding country had been pacified, and made to acknowledge the supremacy of the Spanish rulers, and although three attempts had been made by governor Maldonado to penetrate and subdue those regions, they had all ended in failure, and the hardy mountaineers continued to defy Castilian valor and the power of Charles V. Hence the name *land of war*.

Las Casas proffered to convert that *land of war* to the gospel and to the allegiance of the Spanish crown. He asked for no soldiers or arms to protect him, he asked for no royal aid, even to procure the necessaries of life, during the work of evangelization, provided that sufficient guarantees be given him that, when the Indians of the *land of war* should have been converted and submitted to the sovereignty of the Span-

iards, they should be for ever left in possession of their liberty and of their lands, and granted the benefits of home rule. These guarantees were cheerfully given by governor Maldonado, whose previous conduct had pointed him out as one of the most humane of the Conquistadores. They are contained in the following articles of agreement, called by Las Casas a capitulacion, which bore the signature and seal of the governor and was preserved to posterity by the Protector of the Indians himself.

"If you, or any of the friars here present, namely Father Bartolomé de Las Casas, Rodrigo de Ladrada*) and Pedro de Angulo shall by your care and industry induce the Indians of any province or parts thereof within the limits of my jurisdiction to peace and to recognize his majesty as their lord, and to pay him moderate tributes according to their means and wealth, in gold, if it be found in their country, or in cotton, maize or other produce or merchandise; I say and promise and give my word of honor in the name of the king and in virtue of the powers he gave me that: I will leave them

*) Father Ladrada had come from Peru to Guatemala a short time before. The reader will see how he remained the constant companion of Las Casas from the year 1536 to the time of the latter's death in 1566.

and their countries subject only to his majesty, whom alone they shall have to serve as free vassals, and that I shall not give them to any person whatever or parcel them out into Repartimientos for the benefit of any Spaniard, now or at any future time. I will also forbid, under severe penalties, any Spaniard from molesting them and from going to their countries for the next five years to come; and this in order that no disturbance or scandal may take place while you will be engaged in their conversion. I alone will be permitted to visit them, with your permission, and in your company. I desire to fulfill the will of God in this matter, and that of his majesty the king, and to help you as far as lies in my power in the labors which you will have to undergo in bringing them to the knowledge of God and to the service of his majesty . . . ."

Bishop-elect Marroquin had gone to the city of Mexico to be consecrated. The articles of agreement were sent there to be approved by him as the ordinary of the diocese, and to be approved also by the viceroy of New Spain, that they might have additional binding force. Meanwhile the Fathers set to work to prepare themselves for their difficult task. A spiritual retreat,

spent in fast and prayer, was first made by the whole community, to implore light and help from God. Then lenghty consultations took place to decide on the ways and the means of evangelizing the land of war. The catechism in the Quiché language was given a poetical garb, it being arranged in couplets from beginning to end. The verses were then set to music, as it had been noticed that the Indians of Central America had a special fondness of rhythmical songs. The first couplet told of the creation of the world and of man; another of the fall of Adam and Eve, another of the Redemption. The life of Our Lord was treated in plain but attractive language. In a word, a short but complete exposition of Christian doctrine was for the first time set to music.

The mountaineers of the land of war were paying dear for their independence, isolated and almost besieged as they were, in their mountain homes. They could no longer, as they did before the advent of the white man, descend to the neighboring pueblos of the plains, neither could they buy, sell or barter with the Spaniards, who surrounded them. All the old avenues of commerce had been shut up. Some Indians of Santiago saw in the misfortunes of

the land of war an opportunity for making a few honest dollars. Four of them, who were already Christians, had turned peddlers and made regular trips to the pueblos on the mountains, going loaded with the produce of the plains and returning with those from the higher latitudes.

Las Casas and his companions decided that the travelling merchants should open for them a way to the land of war; and succeeded to interest the quartette in the project of evangelizing their countrymen. The peddling excursions were suspended for a while, and the four Guatemalan Christians took lodgings in the cells of the Dominican convent. I imagine the first American priest sitting with his four pupils and helping them to memorize one by one, the catechetical couplets, and I hear him sing with them for hours at a time. Happily the Central American natives were found endowed with retentive memories, while they were withal a poetical and musical people. The novelty of the rhythmical cadences and the simple melodies exercised so powerful an attraction on them, as to make the scholars throw their hearts and souls in their work and in their study. They must also have felt no little pride in being able to speak and to sing

the poetry and the music of the white men. It was to be, not vocal only, but instrumental music as well. It had been noticed that the native Guatemalans played on instruments of their own invention with considerable skill.

Naturally the negotiations with the governor, the retreat, the long course of catechetical instructions, and the music lessons, required much time, and it was August 1537 before the four peddlers could be got ready to start for the land of war. Besides their packs of ordinary goods of the country, Las Casas took care to give them another full of Castilian trifles, extremely attractive to the Indians, such as scissors, knives, timbrels, little looking glasses, etc. From the peddlers the Fathers had informed themselves very carefully of the social, moral and political conditions of that wild country. They learned, for example, that of all the caciques and petty chiefs, there was one, who exercised a controlling influence over the others. Nothing of importance was ever undertaken in all Tuzulutlan (this was the Indian name of the land of war) without his consent. It was owing especially to the astuteness of that fearless warrior that the several attempts of the Spani-

ards to subjugate the province had failed. For these reasons and because his home was nearer the frontiers of civilization than that of any other important chief, the commercial evangelists were directed by the Fathers to endeavor to attract his attention first, and to gain his good will.

The apostles in the garb of merchants arrived safely in Tuzulutlan, and displayed their wares near the court or wigwam of the chief, whom Las Casas did not hesitate to call a native prince. The news that goods, never seen before, were for sale fetched quite a large number of customers, and business proved so good that the peddlers, after closing hours, could afford to make a handsome present to the cacique.

A frugal meal had been partaken of, and the tropical moon was shooting her rays through the feathery foliage of a gigantic tree, round which were squatted on the ground hundreds of fierce warriors. One of the peddlers calls for a *templanaste* (a native instrument), a second draws out of his wallet a pair of castanets, another a pair of small cymbals and the last a timbrel, and the quartet began to sing, accompanying their own music. The first lay told of the creation of the world. When more music was called for, the creation of man was given.

Nothing like it had ever been heard in all Tuzulutlan. I need not say it, the catechism class lasted until late in the night. The audience were enraptured and enthused not by the strains of music only, but especially by the wonderful tale of Paradise and of Redemption. The musicians were invited to give another concert the following night.

Before sunset men, women and children were seen issuing forth from their wigwams perched on the neighboring summits and gather from many miles around to hear the strange music and stranger history of man's origin and destiny, which the minstrels had played and sung the night before. The attraction was repeated to a much larger audience, many of whom had pondered all day long on the meaning of what the songs had taught them. When the performance came to a close, the cacique, who had listened in speechless astonishment, asked for an explanation of the lesson taught by the poetry and the music.

"That we cannot do," answered the peddlers; "we have given you all we had. The Fathers alone, down in the white men's pueblo, can give the explanation." Of course everybody wished to know

who the Fathers were. "They are men who live without wives, possess nothing of their own, live together in one house, within which no woman ever enters. Their principal business is to do good to others and teach the people the way to Heaven. Their habit is white and over it they wear sometimes a black mantle. Their heads are shaved, and only a few locks are left to grow around the head. Should you wish to hear an explanation of what we sung, they will take pleasure to come and give it to you. Nor need you fear from them, for they are very different from all the other longbearded white men hereabout. On the contrary they are the friends and the Protectors of the Indians."

Curiosity was aroused, and it was agreed between the peddlers and the cacique that the latter's brother, a youth some twenty-two years old, would accompany them to the white people's pueblo, and invite the friars to come to Tuzulutlan to give an explanation of their strange religion. The real object, however, of the astute chief in sending his brother to Santiago was to ascertain if the peddlers had told him the truth about the Fathers. Some presents, out of what the land afforded, were got together and the young man was dispatched with his four companions.

His arrival was a cause of surprise and gratification to every Spaniard in the settlement. The friars received the young man with unspeakable joy, as his request and invitation to visit his people was an unmistakable sign that their labors of the past two years had not been in vain, but promised, on the contrary, abundant fruits in the near future. The cacique's brother remained a few days the guest of the Dominicans, watching their every movement in order to make an intelligent report about their manner of life, and to ascertain if it really corresponded with the description given by the four minstrels.

After a consultation among themselves, and after further imploring divine assistance, the friars decided that Father Luis Cancer, who, of them all, was the most proficient in the common language of the country, should accompany their guest to his home and there study, on the spot, its conditions and the dispositions of the people. Loaded with presents for himself and for his kinsmen, the youthful ambassador, with Father Cancer as his travelling companion, made his way back to the land of war, to which he had dispatched couriers to notify his brother of his coming. Father Cancer found the approaches to Tuzulutlan

lined with arches and bowers of green foliage, and the road itself levelled and swept. There was general rejoicing among the tribesmen at his coming. Imagine the feeling of the apostle. Perhaps the green bowers reminded him of Palm Sunday and the Hosannas of to-day might be changed into the *crucifiges* of the morrow. But the thought only intensified the joy then rebounding in his priestly heart. Had he not left his beloved Zaragoza, in far away Aragon, to look for the crimson crown of martyrdom in the wilds of the New World?

The cacique caused a chapel of trunks of trees, with over it a thatched roof of palmetto leaves, to be built, and Luis Cancer made to flow in it the life blood of Christ, that was to save and redeem the *land of war*.

The Holy Sacrifice made a profound impression on the cacique and on his people. How unlike was the clean, silk-robed, peace loving and peace breathing priest of the Christians, to the filthy, truculent, naked, savage medicine man of his tribe, whom they had watched from childhood, while he snatched the bleeding heart out of the disentrailled victim during the sacrificial hour?

The cacique was converted and baptized,

receiving the name of John. Hereafter he will be known among the Spaniards as *Don Juan* (Sir John). The capitulacion between the Dominicans and the governor helped Father Cancer not a little in obtaining these results. To remain free and almost independent lord of his country and people and to acquire at the same time the friendship of the whites was a weighty consideration with the farseeing chief. Not only did he become a Christian himself, but turning apostle, he exhorted his tribesmen to follow his example. He also proffered his services as travelling companion to Father Cancer during the several excursions that the missionary made to become better acquainted with the surrounding country. Luis Cancer returned to Santiago towards the end of October to bring the glad tidings of his success to his fellow-friars.

The rainy season was about over and Las Casas, accompanied by Father Angulo, undertook the journey to the land of war. Why Cancer was left behind is not said. The same welcome was given to him as had been given to Father Cancer by chief Don Juan and his people. It appears that his brother, the same who had visited Santiago to invite the Fathers, had lately

married, and his bride had just arrived from the distant pueblo of Coban, within the limits of Tuzulutlan province. A large number of prominent people had come along to see the newly wedded maid installed in her new home in the cacique-dome of Don Juan. These at first did not take kindly to the latter's change of religion and set fire to his chapel. But on the arrival of Las Casas, the chief caused a better one to be built at once, where the missioners said Mass daily. After which, now here and then there, in different neighborhoods, the priests spent the day in preaching and catechizing the people in the open air.

But the dominions of Don Juan were not by any means the only ones in the land of war. Farther north and in another mountain range, were the most savage people of that country, who spoke a different dialect. Coban might have been called their capital and they too must be brought within the fold of Christ. Las Casas wished to go thither, but Don Juan opposed his going, fearing that the Father might lose his life in the attempt. Seeing, however, that the priest's resolution was irrevocable, the cacique provided him with a body guard of seventy men selected from among the

bravest of his tribe, whom he made responsible for the life of his friend. There was no need of them; for the Indians of Coban and those of other caciquedoms on the route, received the missioner everywhere as a friend and made no objection to his teaching them the new religion.

This was but a tour of exploration, and Las Casas soon returned to Don Juan to whom he explained the difficulties to be encountered in instructing innumerable people scattered through a large area of mountainous and almost unaccessible country. It was necessary, he argued, to build a pueblo and gather them into it, where they could be taught, not only religion, but trades also and professions. It took the priest days to make the Indians understand the advantages of civilized life. Don Juan himself entered readily enough into the ideas of the missioner, but his people were loath to abandon their wigwams on the mountain sides, and the ways of their ancestors. For "let it be ever so humble," who is not attached to his native home? This is specially true of people living in high latitudes. The Indians of the *Mesas* or table lands of Central America and Mexico prefer to-day earning thirty-five cents a day at home, than move to the Atlantic or the Pacific coasts, where a dollar

a day is paid to them. No wonder then to learn that the first American priest risked the success of his entire undertaking by insisting that the Indians for five, ten and twenty miles around should abandon their cornfields, the huts in which they were born, and the surroundings of childhood, to be housed on the streets of a symmetrical pueblo. But had not the Protector of the Indians told the king in Spain that this was the only way to permanent success in evangelizing and civilizing the aboriginal Americans? Don Juan was therefore persuaded to have as many as a hundred huts or houses built around the chapel and near his own home. Las Casas called the pueblo *Rabinal*,*) which was the name by which the Tuzulutlans designated that particular locality.

At first the will of the cacique and of the white men was resisted, and a revolt was even threatened. But the daily Mass followed by an instruction and some songs

*) The village founded by Las Casas is yet in existence. It may yet become quite a town, as some mines have lately been found in the Sierra. Coban too stands yet, an enduring monument to the zeal of the first American priest, and a witness of his apostolic labors. A railroad will soon penetrate ancient Tuzulutlan, and a number of citizens from the U. S. have lately settled there to raise the favorably known Coban coffee.

that the children were taught to sing, brought every day a larger audience, and one by one the houses became tenanted. Indomitable perseverance triumphed at last, and the town was founded.

There must have been occasional communications between the land of war and Santiago de los Caballeros; for the bull of Pope Paul III. defining that the Indians of the New World were rational and freewilled men, and that therefore they should be taught, like other people, the religion of Jesus Christ, reached Las Casas at Rabinal at about this time, 1538. He translated it at once and sent copies of it wherever he thought they might do the most good. *)

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* The famous bull of Paul III. "*Sublimis Deus Sic Dilexit*" etc. has never yet appeared in English, as far as I know. I'll give a translation of it omitting only the technical phraseology to be found in all similar papal documents.

"Inasmuch as man was created, as the scriptures teach, to enjoy eternal life and eternal happiness, which cannot be obtained without faith in Christ, it necessarily follows that he must be naturally fit to receive it. Whoever therefore has the nature of man is capable of receiving the faith of Christ. Nobody in fact, who can understand what faith means, can be so deficient in intelligence as to be unable to understand the means by which it is transmitted. Hence Our Lord, who is truth itself, and can neither deceive nor be deceived, said to the first preachers of the faith, when he appointed them to their office: "*Go and teach all nations.*" He said, *all nations*, without a single exception, because all are capable

If the reader finds it strange that a papal definition should have been necessary to prove that the aboriginal Ameri-

of the faith. The devil, who is the enemy of mankind and of all good works, to prevent God's children from reaching their eternal destiny, invented a new and unheard of method to prevent the faith being preached to the people and thus prevent their salvation. This method consists in persuading some soldiers, his allies, to constantly proclaim that, inasmuch as the Indians and other people, who inhabit the regions in our own times discovered to the west and to the south of us, are not capable of the faith, we may make the same use of them in our temporal affairs that we make of the beasts of the fields.

But we, who, although His unworthy servant, have been appointed by Jesus Christ his vicar on earth, and who with all our power endeavor to bring into His fold the sheep entrusted to our care, considering that the Indians, who are true men, not only are capable of the faith, but, as we are informed, earnestly desire to embrace it; in order to stamp out this pernicious doctrine, by our apostolic authority and by these present .... define and proclaim that said Indians or any other people, who may be hereafter discovered by Catholics, although they be not Christians, must in no way be deprived of their liberty or their possessions, and that on the contrary they may and must be allowed to enjoy freely and lawfully of said liberty and possessions; that they must not be in any manner enslaved; and that, if they be so enslaved, their slavery must be considered as null and void.

By the same apostolic authority we define also that the said Indians must be called to the faith of Jesus Christ by the word of God and the examples of good and holy lives.

Given in Rome the 17th of June 1537.

PAUL, POPE III.

cans were men, let him remember that during this XIX. century more than one work has been written (one at least by a so-called minister of the gospel) to prove that our negroes are not descended from Adam and Eve, and that therefore they are not men. Slavery can be reconciled with the spirit of the gospel only on that supposition, and the defenders of the slavery of the inferior races, who called themselves Christians, never could long hold their position without having recourse to that unchristian and unscientific theory.

Las Casas was now armed with a new weapon with which to defend his doctrines and the Indians. He and his companion De Angulo, indefatigable as they were, could not attend to all that was to be done in Tuzulutlan. Las Casas therefore called to his assistance Luis Cancer and personally accompanied him to Coban, where they received again a hearty welcome. On his return to Rabinal he learned that bishop Marroquin had arrived in Santiago from Mexico and that Pedro de Alvarado, the direct representative of the king in all Central America, was also in town. Was it a call from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the diocese, or

was it because the Protector of the Indians had been inspired with new hopes of unshackling all the natives of America by the Pope's bull, that he decided to abandon for a time at least the missionary field that was laden with abundant harvest? Subsequent events seem to show that Las Casas thought Spain and not the Indies to be the place where the battle for the Indians' freedom was to be fought. Whatever may have been the reasons, certain it is, that leaving the mission of Rabinal in charge of Father Angulo, Las Casas departed for Santiago, ostensibly to confer with bishop Marroquin about obtaining more evangelical laborers for that part of the Lord's vineyard, which was yet known as the land of war.

To convince the Spaniards of Guatemala that his theory of converting the natives by persuasion and peace, was not a Utopia, Don Juan was invited to accompany him to the city, and the invitation was accepted. But the chief wished to travel with quite an army of his warriors, while the priest feared that some embarrassing mishap might be caused by a large number of Indians entering Santiago at once. He reasoned with Don Juan, that the Spaniards at home were not nearly

as dreadful and as cruel as they were on the battlefield, and he and a smaller contingent of followers would have nothing to fear at their hands. The Cacique was at last persuaded to undertake the journey with an escort sufficiently large to emphasize the importance of the ruler of Tuzulutlan, but not so numerous as to give umbrage to the Spaniards, or cause for apprehension, on the part of the missioner, of possible disorders. Word was sent to Father Ladrada, the only Dominican left in the convent of Santiago, that Don Juan and his suite were coming. In a few days the grounds of the convent were literally covered with huts and tents to accommodate the expected visitors, while an abundance of provisions were gathered wherewith to feed them.

The entry of Las Casas and his Indians from the land of war may be better imagined than described. The bishop hastened to pay Don Juan a visit at the convent, where he had an opportunity of observing and of admiring the gravity of the Indian chief, whom he found, relatively speaking, extraordinarily well instructed in the Christian religion. The interview between the successor of the apostles and the new convert made so good an impression on the former,

that he assured Pedro de Alvarado that it was worth his while to pay him an official visit. Alvarado complied with the bishop's wishes, and at the end of a long conversation, so carried away was he by the manly bearing, the kingly dignity, the wisdom and common sense of Don Juan, that, taking from his own head the official rich taffeta chapeau, he placed it on that of the Indian. He was severely criticised by the bystanding Spaniards for so doing; but the chief thanked the official for the honor conferred upon him, and never gave him cause for regretting his generous action.

With a view to further impress Don Juan with the advantages and splendor of European civilization, and to leave no doubt in his mind that the Spaniards' friendship was genuine and worth having, word was passed around to the merchants of the town, to make, on a given day, as brilliant a display of their goods as possible, and to present the Indian chief with any article in their shops for which he might exhibit a special liking. The bishop would settle the bills. In company of his lordship Marroquin and of Don Alvarado, Don Juan visited the different establishments of Santiago; but while expressing with gravity

his admiration for many European articles, the like of which he had never seen, as silk stuffs, gold and silver ware, he declined to accept all the many presents offered him, except one. This was a large picture of Our Blessed Lady. He questioned the bishop about it, and his explanations, he said, tallied with what the missioners had told him about the Blessed Mother of Christ. Having received it reverentially, he turned it over to a prominent man of his suite, with instruction to handle it very carefully. No doubt Don Juan wished the Spaniards to understand that the allegiance of the lord of Tuzulutlan was not to be bought with presents. As to the Blessed Virgin's picture he wished it, I reckon, to adorn his chapel at Rabinal.

The members of his suite were not so particular; and they returned to their homes, in company of Las Casas and Father Ladrada, loaded with presents. The reader needs not be told that the convent of Santiago remained deserted. From Rabinal Las Casas wished to travel to distant Coban with Father Ladrada to found there a permanent missionary establishment. In this undertaking they received the willing assistance of two Caciques, the neighbors of Don Juan, one of whom was called Don

Pedro, and the other Don Miguel. Meanwhile other Dominicans were summoned from elsewhere to replace the missioners to the land of war.

The four apostles, Las Casas, Ladrada, Cancer and Angulo, continued in the work of evangelization in Tuzulutlan, until the year 1538, at the beginning of which, through their confrères of Santiago they were called by the bishop to a conference to devise ways and means of providing the extensive new diocese with a sufficient number of priests to attend to the spiritual welfare of the growing white population as well as of the natives, who were flocking to the Church daily in larger numbers. The prelate told the Fathers that he set aside in Guatemala certain sums to be used to defray the travelling expenses of new missionaries besides some cash held by a friend of his in Spain for the same purpose. His lordship's preference was that the new comers should be Dominicans and Franciscans, but wished to have the opinion of the Fathers on the important subject. It would be necessary to the object in view to send to Spain somebody influential enough to gather together a sufficient number of missioners.

The views of the bishop were concurred

in unanimously, and very naturally Las Casas was pointed out as the proper person to undertake the journey. In a few days the first American priest in company of his hereafter *fidus acates*, Father Rodrigo de Ladrada was on the march to cross for the fourth time the American continent in the interests of the Indians. His travelling expenses this time came out of the episcopal treasury. They journeyed to Mexico City through the land of war, where Don Juan was at first dismayed to hear that Las Casas was about to leave for his native Spain, but was soon consoled by the promise that his return would not be long delayed. The leave taking at Rabinal with those whom he had lately engendered in Christ, reminds us of St. Paul's farewell to his converts of Ephesus and Miletum. (Act. Apost. Cap. XX.)

Chapter XXI.

Las Casas Crosses the Atlantic the Seventh Time in the Interest of the Indians.

LAS Casas selected the longer route to Spain by Mexico City to attend a provincial chapter of the order, to have his trip to Spain approved by the same, and to have other Fathers sent to the land of war to continue the evangelization of that country. After some delay, the chapter approved Las Casas' voyage, and Father Luis Cancer was summoned to become an additional travelling companion, new Fathers were sent to Rabinal, Coban and Santiago and de Angulo was appointed Las Casas' vicar general in those parts during his absence.

Governor Maldonado had given the Protector of the Indians a letter of recommendation to Charles V. on the occasion of his leaving Santiago. After describing the work already accomplished in Tuzulutlan the governor ended his letter with the following paragraphs:

"Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas goes to those kingdoms (Spain) in company of Father Ladrada. He is a person of good and exemplary life, who is well known here for his zeal in instructing and protecting the natives and insuring their good treatment. Furthermore his intentions and his efforts are directed to your majesty's service. I beg your majesty to favor him and to encourage him to persevere in his good undertaking. He is well informed about everything that is going on in these parts, and will be able to give you any information that you may desire."

As this letter is dated October 16, 1539, it is clear that Las Casas could scarcely have reached Spain before the beginning of 1540. But by the 9th of January of that year, he had already caused a decree to be issued by the council of the Indians addressed to the governor and to the bishop of Guatemala, in which it is ordered that the religious instruction of the slaves belonging to the Spanish settlers be carefully attended to. His activity is again evidenced by another decree confirming the privileges granted to the Indians of Rabinal, Coban and the rest of the land of war, and forbidding the Spaniards to

settle on, or to travel through it, without the consent of the Fathers. Their freedom and almost total independence is also guaranteed thereby. About the same time letters were written and dispatched in the name of Charles V. to the Christian Caciques of Tuzulutlan congratulating them on their acceptance of the Christian faith, and once more assuring them that the aforementioned guarantees would be faithfully observed. In still another decree addressed to the highest judicial authorities in New Spain (Guatemala was then a part of it) the judges of the Audiencia of Mexico City are commanded to see to it that the infractors of the foregoing and other similar laws be properly punished. This last decree is dated October the 17th, 1540.

It is not difficult to explain why Las Casas was now granted so readily all that he asked for his Indians. Old Fonseca had died, and cardinal Loaysa, Archbishop of Seville, had succeeded him in the presidency of the bureau for Indian affairs, the personel of which had also been greatly changed. While the offices of the Indian council were of old not unfrequently closed against the Clerigo Las Casas, they were now wide open to Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. Although the biographers of

the first American priest have generally overlooked it, it is nevertheless a fact that the change of policy in regard to the aborigines by the Spanish government was due very largely to the bull of Pope Paul III.

By the end of 1540 Las Casas was ready to sail for America with all the Dominicans and Franciscans whom Bishop Marroquin wished to import into Guatemala. But perhaps it was because cardinal Loaysa had requested him to tarry longer in Spain, that he wrote to Charles V., who was then in Germany, the following letter, which explains itself:

"Most high and most powerful lord!

While in Guatemala, in the Indies, I received your letters and provisions, whereby your Majesty directed that I and some other members of my order of St. Dominic should continue the work of pacification of certain several provinces, which had not yet accepted your sovereignty, and that we should induce them to acknowledge themselves your subjects. We began the work and were making good progress. In fact the native lords of those provinces have already come to see us privately, and we hope, with the help of God Our Lord, that we will be able to bring them, and many

more, to the knowledge of their Creator and to the obedience of your Majesty, by the ways of peace, charity and good works. Thus the kingdom of Christ will be extended and your dominions and revenues increased. But things of more importance and of greater service to your Majesty, which concern the whole of that New World, which Divine Providence has consigned to your protection and administration, induced me to come to kiss your Majesty's hand and report to you personally about abuses so serious, that, if they be not corrected, interests more important than those of all your other kingdoms will be endangered. Therefore I thought it advisable to suspend for a while my work in Guatemala, and to undertake a journey hither. But on my arrival in Castile, I found that your Majesty was absent. Should I return without making to you my report, I feel that much harm would thereby accrue to the Indies, by the postponement of remedies to the aforementioned abuses. In order therefore that I may not fail in the obedience which I have promised my monastic superiors, I ask your Majesty to be pleased to command me, and by your royal letters to instruct the Provincial of this province to command

me also, to wait for your coming. I am certain that you will consider my report a service rendered by me and by the Dominican order to your Majesty. If not, I will return to the Indies conscious of having done my duty to God and to my king. The bearer of this letter is Father James de Testera, an apostolic man of the order of St. Francis, who has done much service to your Majesty in the Indies. May God prosper and prolong the years of your Majesty's reign.

Your servant, etc.

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas."

Why did he not set out at once for America with the Dominican and Franciscan Fathers? The question must be answered as follows: Although there is no documentary evidence to prove it, the fact may nevertheless be properly surmised in the light of subsequent events. Armed with the bull of Paul III., Las Casas had, during his past ten months residence in Castile, left not a stone unturned to induce the council of the Indies to enact the necessary legislation to insure the liberty and protection of the Indians. No doubt he had brought over to his way of thinking cardinal Loaysa, and the majority of the members of the bureau for Indian

affairs. But nothing of importance could be done in the absence of the king. Should he bury himself once more in the wilds of the land of war? If he did so, the Protector of the Indians knew that the unfortunates would soon pass again out of mind of the Spanish court, and that the evils of slavery would meanwhile cast deeper and deeper roots on American soil. His remaining longer in Spain was evidently of a paramount importance to his wards, the Indians. But practically he was an agent of bishop Marroquin, at whose expense he had come to Europe, and, in virtue of his vows, his actions were also subject to the direction of his monastic superiors. To enable himself to remain longer in Castile with propriety, and to show bishop Marroquin that, if he did so, it was for sufficient reasons, Las Casas had recourse to the subterfuge of asking the emperor to command him to prolong his stay in Spain.

At first sight the conduct of the first American priest, viewed in this light, is subject to criticism. But countless generations of the American aborigines have good reasons, as we shall see, to thank him for having had recourse to that subterfuge in their behalf. For otherwise the *nuevas leyes* or *ordenanzas* (about which much is

to be said presently) would perhaps never have been enacted, and without them it is doubtful if a vestige would now remain of the native race on the western continent.

Charles V., who had not forgotten the bold Clerigo, *micer Bartolomé*, and who had probably kept well informed about his late doings at Madrid, granted his request without difficulty, and Las Casas postponed his departure.

The recruits for the missions of Guatemala, Dominicans and Franciscans, were now gathered in Seville and the Protector of the Indians was with them. The decrees concerning the Indians of Tuzulutlan were published by the public crier at the sounds of the herald's trumpet in front of the great cathedral at ten o'clock in the morning of the 21st of January 1541.

Las Casas, who had just received orders from Loaysa (the readers know why) to remain longer in Spain, decided to send Luis Cancer to accompany the missioners, to deliver to the proper American authorities the decrees obtained, and to see to it that they were executed and put in force.

The council of the Indies recommended to the emperor that all past legislation concerning the American Indians should be remodelled and recast in their favor. All

contemporary writers and all the biographers of Las Casas are agreed, that he was the prime mover in inducing the council to reach this decision. As had been done in 1519 and in 1520, juntas or conventions of learned ecclesiastics, jurists, statesmen, and theologians were again called together, who for days and weeks met again and again to discuss the needs of the Indians, and to formulate laws which were intended to do justice to the Spaniards and to the Indians alike. As usual in such gatherings many shades of opinion developed, and Las Casas was always in evidence to advocate his own in that forcible style so peculiar to the first American priest. As a matter of course, the Protector of the Indians was the leader of those who stood for the complete emancipation of the Americans.

At one of the meetings Las Casas presented a voluminous memorial of the contents of which the following quotation will give an idea. He suggests sixteen remedies for the reformation of the Indies, of which "the eighth is the one most important and essential, because, without it, the others would be worth nothing, as all of them are subordinate to this one, and are directed to it as means to an end. The importance of

it is greater than could be expressed in words, so great in fact, that its adoption or rejection will decide if your Majesty will retain or lose all the Indies and all their people. It consists in this: Let your Majesty order and command by pragmatic sanction, and by the highest law of your realms, proclaimed in the presence of the Cortes solemnly assembled, that all the Indians in the Indies, those who are already, as well as those who will hereafter become your subjects, be declared the free vassals of the united kingdoms of Castile and Leon, recognizing no other lord than your Majesty; that none of them shall ever be given in Encomiendas to any Spaniards, that on the contrary it shall for ever be unconstitutional, contrary to your will and to the supreme law of the land, to give them to anybody in Encomiendas or otherwise or to exact from them any personal service for any necessity or need whatsoever. To give it greater binding force, let your Majesty take a formal oath upon your Christian faith and upon your royal word, your crown, or anything else that Christian princes are wont to swear by, that, at no time, either personally or through those, who will succeed you in these and those kingdoms (the American) you will revoke,

as far as you are concerned, this supreme law. Let your Majesty insert also in your royal testament a clause commanding that it be forever defended, guarded and upheld. . . . ."

Charles V. was perhaps, at this period, surrounded by as wise, far-seeing, and sagacious councillors as any monarch had ever been before. They saw that the measures recommended by Las Casas, unblunted and unmitigated, were those of an ex-parte advocate, who considered exclusively his own point of view. They would defeat themselves, they thought, and lead to revolution and anarchy. His views were accepted in principle, but legislation was so shaped as to make its enforcement practicable. The *nuevas leyes* (new laws), so called for many years after, which were enacted in 1541 and 1542, have formed the admiration of every historian and jurist, who studied them deeply in connection with the social conditions then prevailing in America. Las Casas had gained the battle of his life. Slavery was abolished, if not at once and by one stroke of the pen, after one generation.

The world should know it. The originator of the crusade in favor of truly American liberty was a simple Catholic

priest, who broke the shackles of not less than thirty millions of human beings, who were or would have been slaves, on this western continent, at the very time, when the so-called Reformation caused the Old World to be drenched in blood. It was a cardinal and numerous other prelates of the old Church, who drafted the plan of legislation that saved the American race from utter extinction.

I need quote but a few of the new laws to show that, if they were not clothed in his words, they contained almost in *toto* the ideas of the first American priest.

"1st. The Encomiendas heretofore established legally, shall not pass to the children or the wives of the conquistadores, but only tributes shall be collected from the Indians, who shall become the free vassals of the king.

2d. It is forbidden to employ Indians as carriers, except in unavoidable circumstances; and the Indians so employed shall be paid wages. They shall not be employed in the mines or the pearl fisheries. The personal, enforced labor of the Indians is abolished, and tributes shall be levied instead on the Indians, for the benefit of the owners of Encomiendas.

3rd. All participants in the disturbances

caused by Pizarro and Almagro in Peru shall be deprived of their Encomiendas.

4th. Bishops, hospitals, governors, mayors of towns, judges and his majesty's officers shall be deprived of their Encomiendas.

5th. It is hereby forbidden, even in case of rebellion, or for any other reason whatever, to enslave Indians, and we wish that all the natives of the Indies be treated like, as in fact they are, free vassals of the crown of Castile.

6th. It shall be forbidden to compel the Indians to do service against their will and consent.

7th. As it is forbidden in any manner whatever to enslave Indians, it is ordered that the Audiencias summon all those who have Indian slaves in their possession, and if it be found that these have been enslaved without reason or right, the same must be set free summarily and without process of law. The burden of proof, to show the legal ownership of the slaves, shall rest with the slaveholders. And as it may happen that for want of attorneys or representatives the Indians may acknowledge themselves as slaves, it is ordered that conscientious and careful men be appointed as attorneys, and that the same be paid out

of the court fees to represent the Indians.

8th. It is also ordered and commanded that hereafter no viceroy, governor, Audiencia, discoverer of new lands, or any other person whatever shall have power to give Indians in Encomiendas as a remuneration for services rendered, or as a gift, or sale or in any other manner whatsoever, even if the case be of an Encomienda which has become vacant. When the holder of an Encomienda shall die, the Indians thereof shall be declared the free vassals of the crown; and it shall be the duty of the Audiencia to inform themselves about the rank of the deceased, his character, his merits and his services, if he left a wife, children or other heirs, and to make a report on the matter to the king, as well as on the qualities of the Indians themselves and of their lands; in order that what shall appear right and equitable may be done for the wife, children or heirs. If in the meantime it shall appear to the Audiencia that said wife, children or heirs be in need of temporary assistance, it may be given to them out of the tributes that the Indians shall pay, as these must be declared free vassals of the king."

The new laws were enacted in Valladolid, and received the signature of Charles V. November 20th of the year 1542.

What had aroused and decided the council of the Indies and the emperor himself to adopt rather suddenly the foregoing and other radical reforms? No doubt the bull of Pope Paul III. acted as an incentive on the friars, bishops, archbishops and the cardinal, who sat as members of the bureau for Indian affairs, and no less on His Most Catholic Majesty. But a little pamphlet by Las Casas had more to do with it than anything else. He called it a "*Brevisima Relacion de la Destruccion de las Indias*, i. e. A very brief exposé of the destruction of the Indies," from which itself enough can be gathered that it was written during the years 1541 and 1542, and that the original draft was retouched later, when it was published by Las Casas himself. In fact a manuscript copy of the original, lately found by Antonio Fabié, begins as follows: "The Indies were discovered in 1492; the following year they began to be settled, so that it is now fourty-nine years since they were taken possession of by any considerable number of Spaniards. The author therefore must have been writing either in 1541 or rather about May 1542; for it was in that month of the year 1493 that Columbus landed in Hispaniola with some two thousand imi-

grants. Again the author, speaking of Hernando de Soto in Florida, says: "The fourth tyrant went there lately during the year 1538 .... It is now three years since he has not been seen, and nothing has been heard of him." This therefore must have been written in 1541.

The pamphlet consists of about seventy-five closely printed octavo pages. Las Casas, ever since he was appointed official Protector of the Indians, had lost no opportunity to gather evidence everywhere and from everybody, who had any to give, of the cruelties and oppressions practiced by the Spaniards against his wards. In 1541, or at the beginning of 1542, when the Spanish court had set to work in earnest to remodel American colonial legislation, Las Casas gathered the vast mass of memorandums he had made during the past twenty years, then dipped his pen in gall, and wrote the pamphlet which soon became the most famous of his works. It is a graphic and exaggerated (at least all writers think so) description of all the massacres, kidnapping expeditions, brutal wars, wanton cruelties and thefts of the American settlers from New Mexico to Chili, and from Argentina to Florida. The pamphlet was no doubt presented to the councillors, who

were at work on the laws in 1542. It must have caused a thrill of horror in the heart of Charles V. and of his son Philip, and on all the grandees of the court. Hence the prompt enactment of the new laws. In 1552, as many abuses, although greatly abated, still continued in America, in spite of said laws, Las Casas revised his pamphlet, added to it, and then gave it to the press. It was translated into Italian and into French, and soon became the stock in trade of many foreign writers, who used it as an armory, whence they drew their weapons to fight Spain often unscrupulously, and by misrepresentations. Las Casas however never accused the Spanish nation as such, or its government of being guilty of the atrocities he describes in his pamphlet, although in later writings of his he does not wholly exonorate either the nation or the government from enriching themselves at the expense of the American Indians. The historian is forced to acknowledge that the central government of Ferdinand and Isabella, of Charles V. and Philip II. endeavored unremittingly to ameliorate the condition of the unfortunate Americans and to protect them from the cruelty and rapacity of the European immigrants. But, as has been said before, during the first

fifty years of American colonization scarcely more than the scum of Spain crossed the Atlantic to settle in the Indies. Those immigrants first ignored, and then defied the governing power of Madrid, and were subject only to the whims and ambition of whatever conquistador happened, for the time being, to be in the ascendency. The conquistadores were in the main men of low extraction, who by daring deeds of valor, and by chance, were in several instances converted into veritable monarchs who barely acknowledge allegiance to the mother country. A Cortez, a Pizarro, an Alvarado, an Almagro etc. each conquered, in a few months, a vast empire with a handful of followers. Each of these, after wading through torrents of blood, that made them callous to the gentler instincts of humanity, clamored for a division of spoils, for wealth and for a life of ease and debauchery, as soon as the semblance of order was established in the new countries. The conquistadores were compelled to yield or fall. The thirst for wealth and gold could only be satiated at the expense of the natives. No doubt, as Las Casas demonstrates in his pamphlet, thousands, and perhaps millions, of aboriginal Americans perished at the hands of the Castilian con-

querors. It is nevertheless to the credit of Spain that in less than three quarters of a century it brought order out of chaos in America, and placed not less than thirty-five millions of savages (including the Filipinos) on the way to civilization. If we look at the map of the world at the present time and read the history of the past four centuries, we find that scarcely a tribe has been brought within the pale of Christian civilization during that period, except by Spain. Look over the almost limitless possessions of the colonizing nations, England, France and Holland, and it will be found that the native races have either disappeared or remained strangers to Christianity or European civilization, destined only to have their lifeblood sucked out of them for the enrichment of their white masters. *)

*) Perhaps an exception might be made in favor of Russia, who, during the present century has undoubtedly extended the confines of civilization and of christendom in a westerly and southwesterly direction.

History seems to teach that savage nations can be civilized only by a strongly centralized and absolute government in combination with a compact union of Church and state. Under every form of representative government the weaker race invariable succumbs to the stronger and nothing remains but the survival of the fittest. Watch South Africa where a cruel war is now (Dec. 1899) raging between two

I will end this chapter with an extract from Las Casas' *Brevisima Relacion de la Destruccion de Las Indias.* It will give an idea of the bitter, caustic and exaggerated style of that famous work. It will also check our inclination to hero-worship, as he will tell us what he thought of Ponce de Leon, Panfilo de Narvaez, and of Hernando de Soto.

"To that province (Florida) have gone at different times three tyrants, beginning with the year 1510 or 1511**) to do the work that others had done elsewhere. Two of them (Ponce de Leon and Panfilo de Narvaez) had reached positions in other parts of the Indies, disproportionate with their former condition, through the blood and deaths of their fellow-men (the Indians). All three of them died bad deaths, and lost their lives and the fortunes, which they had accumulated by shedding human blood. I was ac-

peoples of teutonic descent. Let the English or the Boer be the victor, it matters not. The black man in either case is doomed.

**) School books generally tell us that the discoverer of Florida was Ponce de Leon, and that he landed in 1512. Las Casas tells us more than once that the first white men to land in Florida were certain kidnappers of Indians, who stumbled on the northern shore of the Gulf of Mexico not later than 1511.

quainted with all three of them, and their memory is now forgotten as if they had never lived. They left in that land (Florida) scandals and their names in abhorrence on account of certain massacres of which they were guilty. These massacres however were not numerous, as God killed them before they could do more of their work. Almighty God had selected that country as the place where condign punishment was to be administered for the crimes, which I knew they were guilty of in other parts of the Indies, of which I was an eye witness. The fourth tyrant (Hernando de Soto) began his expedition after much preparation and with great eclat as late as 1538. It is now three years since anything was seen or heard of him. I feel certain that, as soon as he landed, he began his cruelties, and then disappeared, or, if he is living, that he and his followers have, during the last three years, destroyed many people wherever they found them; for he (Hernando de Soto) is an experienced leader in such works, and one of those, who, together with his followers, did most harm, and caused most destruction in many provinces and kingdoms. But I am inclined to think that God meted out to him the same fate that he had visited on the others.

Three or four years after I had written the foregoing there came forth, out of that land of Florida, the other tyrants, who had followed the chief tyrant, whom they left behind dead. From them I learned of the unheard of cruelties and barbarities, which, especially during his life time, but also after his unhappy death, those inhuman men had there perpetrated against the innocent and harmless ones of that country, as if what I had foretold, was bound to be fulfilled. So many were the said cruelties as to prove the truth of the rule laid down at the beginning of this work that the further they proceeded in their discoveries, in their massacres and destruction of people, the greater were their iniquities and outrages against God and against their neighbors. I am sick of recounting so many, so horrible and bloody works, not of men, but of savage beasts, and I care not to write of more than the following. They oppressed them and killed them using them as beasts of burden. The wretches, so loaded, were made to march in single file chained one to the other by their necks, and if any one of them got tired or fainted, they cut his head with a sword, this falling to one side and the body to the other; and thus they spared

themselves the trouble of unchaining those, who went before him in the way that I have described before. They entered a pueblo, where they were received with signs of rejoicing, and where they got plenty to eat and more than six hundred Indians, destined to be their carriers and their orderlies. On leaving the place one of the captains, a relative of the chief tyrant, returned to the town, and sacked it after having killed the cacique and done other cruelties. In another pueblo, where the people, who had heard of the horrible and infamous deeds of the Spaniards, were shy of them, they killed everybody, men, women and children.

The tyrants cut the noses of many. On one occasion, when some two hundred Indians had come to camp either uninvited, or because they had been summoned to do so by the tyrants, they cut the noses of them all, and sent them back so disfigured, in torments and in blood, to spread the news of the works and miracles of those preachers of the Holy Catholic faith. Now imagine the dispositions of those people, how they must love the Christians, how readily believe in their religion, and in their God. Enormous and abominal were the atrocities committed in that land by

those miserable men, the children of perdition. Thus died their hapless leader (De Soto) without confession, and I doubt not that he was buried in hell, unless perchance God dealt with him according to his exceeding mercy, and not according to the man's deserts."

Chapter XXII.

Las Casas a Bishop.

THE new laws were dispatched to every officer of the crown, to every bishop and priest, and to every white settlement in the Indies. While they were being discussed in Valladolid, every district in America was represented by procurators, who swarmed around the government offices, endeavoring, by hook or crook, to prevent their enactment. As soon as their promulgation had became known in Spain, the American settlers were informed by their agents that the author, or at least the promoter of them had been Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas. The answers that began, a few months later, to pour into Spain from beyond the Atlantic were filled with abuse and calumnies against the Protector of the Indians. Many of them are spicy, and afford entertaining reading matter. Here is one written in the name of the town council of Guatemala city, informing the council of the Indies of the state of

the popular mind in reference to the new laws. It begins thus:

"They (the people) speak very boldly against the emperor, and ask if this is the way he repays them for their twenty and thirty years services in conquering for him at the peril of their lives and without any expense to him, so many and so distant lands."

They end the description of the popular clamor against the laws by quoting their saying: "If these laws are enforced many will very likely die of despair."

Then Las Casas gets pepper.

"It is reported, they say, that Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas had a hand in drafting this cruel sentence against them, and they claim to be astonished that so old an institution (the Repartimientos) and so well thought of by many learned ecclesiastics, could be upset by an ignorant friar, who is anything but a saint; jealous, vain, irascible, restless, scandalous, and so disagreeable that he was expelled from every place in these Indies, in which he has been. They can not bear him in any monastery, and he obeys nobody and is always on the go. In this city and province alone could he remain through the indulgence of our bishop. We bore

with him and sent him with an abundance of money to get more friars. But he preferred to make a show of himself by his passions, doing harm to everybody in general, in order to revenge himself of individuals, rather than do what we had sent him to do. He says that he spent in these parts thirty or more years. Those thirty years he spent in Hispaniola and Cuba, where the Indians disappeared in a short time, and he helped, to some extent, to kill them. He did no more than pass through this country on his way to Mexico, and as he found no audience to listen to his scandalous declamations and denunciations, he came back to us because he thinks that we are fools. He can give no information about the Indians of New Spain, and what he saw here on the roads through which he passed, is, that the Indians are well instructed. Would to God that Fray Bartolomé would come with his soldiers (a reference to his Cumana venture) to make the conquest, which, it is reported, he asked should be given in his charge. He would then give us one more proof of his vanity and of his ignorance, and he himself would revenge us for the rancor he has displayed against us."

The colony of Guatemala, with its well

bred Alonso Maldonado as governor, and the zealous and energetic Marroquin as its bishop, was one of the most conservative and best behaved in America. What must have been the rage and fury of the colonists elsewhere, when it became known that Las Casas practically and substantially was the author of the new laws?

But what cared he for the faraway murderous conquistadores? He had fulfilled his mission and saved the American race from extermination. And had he not earned the esteem and plaudits of all his countrymen, whose good opinion was worth having, to say nothing of the gratitude and love of countless helpless fellow-men beyond the Atlantic?

At the beginning of the year 1543 the court of Spain was sitting at Barcelona, and Las Casas went there also to thank Charles V. for having enacted the new laws in favor of the Indians. One Sunday evening Francisco de Los Cobos, the secretary of the bureau for Indian affairs, presented himself to the Protector of the Indians to hand him an imperial decree designating him as the first bishop of the new See of Cuzco, in Peru. Los Cobos presented at the same time an earnest request of his majesty to Fray Bartolomé that he accept

the mitre. Las Casas politely declined receiving the document on the plea, that being a friar, his superiors must first be consulted on the subject.

He had not forgotten that twenty-two years before, very near that same city of Barcelona in the presence of the highest court officials he had solemnly and impassionately said to the emperor:

"That my meaning may not be misunderstood, I hereby renounce and decline any favor or temporal reward that your majesty may hereafter offer me. And should it come to pass that I, either personally or through a third person, directly or indirectly, should solicit any favor or reward for my services, I am willing to be branded as a liar and a traitor to my king."

That however was not the only reason for declining the bishopric of Cuzco. He could have done so without breaking his word, for the mitre of that See, on which were set more thorns than jewels, could scarcely have been considered as a reward. He could otherwise have accepted it on the plea that it was his duty to comply with the wishes of his sovereign and not refuse the burden. I reckon that his real reason for not accepting the proffered honor, was because he did not think himself the proper

person to fill the See of Cuzco under the conditions then prevailing in Peru. He had called that country "*Aquel infierno del Peru*" ("that hell of Peru"). And indeed it was little better just when he was called upon to become the bishop of Cuzco, the largest Indian town of the empire of the Incas, where a handful of Spaniards, after having massacred thousands of the Indians, were ready at any moment to cut each others throats. In less than four years time, Peru had seen two bloody revolutions, and was now prepairing for another. Cuzco itself had seen the execution of Almagro the partner of Pizarro in the conquest in 1538, and that of his halfbreed son in 1542, while Pizarro himself had been assassinated at Lima June the 26th, 1541. Blasco Nuñes de Vela was then about to sail for Peru as its first viceroy to publish and to enforce the new laws, which, in that country meant the total abolition of the Repartimientos and the shattering of colossal fortunes accumulated or to be accumulated through the labors of the Indians. Las Casas, to whom every ship arriving in Spain from the new world, brought a bag of letters from almost every part of the Indies, where Spaniards had settled, was well informed of the state of affairs in Peru.

Blasco Nuñes was hot headed, proud and unyielding. His attempt to enforce the new laws ended first in revolution and then in open rebellion, during which he lost his life. Pedro de La Gasca, his successor was compelled to yield in the matter of those same new laws and agree to a compromise. Clearly Las Casas, the promoter, if not the author, of the laws was not the man to become the bishop of the largest diocese in the country, and another Dominican, Juan Solano was appointed instead.

But cardinal Loaysa, who had been instrumental to the first American priest being selected as bishop of Cuzco, thought that the best informed and the most zealous ecclesiastic in the Indies, should wear a mitre. Chiapa, or as it was then called, Ciudad Real de Chiapa in the province of Guatemala had been lately erected into a diocese, and Juan de Arteaga had been selected to be its first bishop. But he died in the city of Puebla, in Mexico, while on his way to take possession of his See. The diocese of Chiapa was contiguous to the land of war, which, by a special decree approved by the pope, was annexed to its jurisdiction. Las Casas was therefore nominated bishop of Chiapa. He declined the mitre a second time. But his prayers,

his tears, his protests were all in vain. The wishes of the king, the command of his superiors, the good of his children of Tuzulutlan caused him at last to yield.

While waiting for the papal bulls authorizing his consecration, Las Casas went from Barcelona to Toledo, where a general chapter of the Dominican provinces was then in session. The object of his journey was to beg the superiors of the order there assembled, to allow him to select quite a large number of Fathers willing to work in faraway Chiapa in the evangelization of the Indians. Not less than sixty volunteered, and Las Casas accepted them all, although ultimately only forty-five sailed with him for America, thirty-five priests, five deacons and as many lay brothers. They came from different parts of Spain and were directed to gather, some at Salamanca, and others at Valladolid, whence all were to unite in Seville to sail from the neighboring port of San Lucar de Barrameda. Twelve Franciscans were also engaged for the new diocese.

Las Casas' presentation, by Charles V., to the bishopric of Chiapa must have been made and accepted in 1543, but the papal bulls authorizing his consecration were not signed by Pope Paul III. until the 19th of

December of the same year. Much of the intervening time was employed in recruiting and getting together the friars in Seville, in obtaining from different sources large supplies of church vestments, bells, and books for so large a number of missioners and many other things necessary to a bishop's establishment in a new diocese in a new country.

Between his election to the mitre of Chiapa and his departure for America, Las Casas wrote a memorial addressed to Charles V., lately published by Antonio Fabié, which denotes a comprehensive information about men and events then transpiring in revolutionary Peru and South America. The document consists of twenty closely printed octavo pages, in which, after having denounced in his usual forcible style, the barbarities of the Spaniards in the Indies, he boldly advises the emperor to sequester all the estates and all the wealth of the Conquistadores in Peru. "Your Majesty," says he, "will act justly and do a thing pleasing to God in depriving such wicked transgressors against the laws of God and your own of all their wealth, which is not theirs, but stolen from your Majesty's vassals, etc."

The emperor is advised to restore said

wealth to their rightful owners, when possible, and when not possible to divide it into two shares, one of which should go to the Conquistadores in case they should elect to live in America, and the other to become public property and the interest thereof to be spent for the public weal.

With as much directness and as plainly as a prime minister would have done in presenting a schedule of appointments to vacant offices, Las Casas passes next to tell the emperor what measures should be taken and what kind of men should be sent to Peru to reestablish law and order in that distracted country. "Your Majesty must arrange to sent viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza to the provinces of Peru, with supreme power from yourself over the Audiencia and everybody else. On arriving there he will reestablish order and settle all contentions, by getting out of the country all individuals dangerous to public peace, especially the son of Almagro and his principal followers and all the leaders of the two factions of Pizarro and Almagro, because it is expedient that not a man, who has distinguished himself on either side, remain in all that country."

Whoever studied subsequent events in the history of Peru can surmise that the ad-

vice of Las Casas was acted upon by Charles V., as far as the appointments in the government of that country were concerned. Instead of despoiling the Conquistadores of their wealth, it is well known that the spirit of revolt brewing everywhere in Spanish America soon compelled the Spanish rulers to suspend and partially abrogate the new laws, thus opening to the Spaniards in America a door to more thefts and to more oppression of the Indians for a time, at least.

Two months of the year 1544 had come and gone, and the papal bulls necessary to make the first American priest a bishop had not yet arrived in Spain. Impatient of further delay, and on account of the large daily expense necessary to the maintainance of his numerous suite, Las Casas decided to use the privilege, which had been granted to Spanish bishops-elect of taking possession of their Sees, with the consent of the king, before their consecration. On the 5th of March, 1544, he bade farewell to his friends at court, and departed for Seville. In a letter dated in that city the 21st of March and addressed to Prince Philip he says: "We left court on Tuesday the 4th inst., and it took us sixteen days to come here on account of the

long rains and bad roads. . . . . We have received a letter from the court informing us, that our bulls arrived two days after our departure. It seems that Our Lord does not wish to pay us in this world for the little trials that we are undergoing for love of him. We would otherwise have been very proud to have your Highness stand our godfather at our consecration. The bulls have not yet reached here. We could not come here by the way of Toledo because the man we had engaged to carry our luggage, would not agree to it. We would have liked to do so in order to speak to the provincial of the Franciscans about the twelve friars, of whom only four have yet arrived here. I beg you to have a letter written to him, telling him to send the others as soon as possible, if they wish to sail with us'' etc.

Las Casas was consecrated bishop on the 31st of March, 1544, as appears from the following written in Seville and again addressed to Prince Philip. ''Today, Passion Sunday, Our Lord was pleased to give me the glory of my consecration, while on the same day, according to the liturgy of the Church, he suffered ignominy. I don't know what His Divine Majesty may have had in view in arranging things in that

way. But it could not have been done sooner, and there was no time to wait longer, because the ships are in a hurry to sail. The cardinal (of Seville) was very kind to me. His nephew or relative, bishop Loaysa, was the consecrator, and the bishop of Honduras and bishop Torres were the assistants. The bishop of Honduras was to sail seven or eight days ago, but in spite of the expense he was put to, in doing so, poor as he is, he waited to participate in the consecration. I would like to compensate him, if I had the wherewiths. I humbly request you, and would be much obliged to your Highness, if you should do something for him to repay him for what he did for me. . . . .

I beg your Highness that, for the love of God, you see to it that the Indians of Cuba, according to the will and kindness of his Majesty, be set free before their masters have a chance to destroy and kill them all, because they are among those who have been most oppressed, afflicted and decimated. As archdeacon Albaro de Castro is now dead, who had been charged by your Highness with the care of the Indians of Hispaniola, let your Highness appoint some good and conscientious person, or an ecclesiastic to see to it that they, few as

they are, be not deprived of the remedy and mercy which His Majesty has dispensed to them. It seems to me that it would be well to give this charge to Alvaro de Leon who is a canon of the cathedral of La Vega, or to Gregorio de Viguera, the dean of the same Cathedral."

It seems that the first American priest never took pen in hand to write without saying something in favor of the Indians. At the risk of being accused of prolixity I cannot refrain translating almost *in toto* the following long letter addressed from Seville to the same august correspondent on the 20th of April, 1544.

"Your Highness commands me to send you the names of all the friars who are about to sail with me. I'll do so when, please God, we shall have them all together in San Lucar. Now we have, I believe, forty-three of them, and I know that some more, seven or eight, will come from this province, and they are men of great virtue and zeal. We would have more, but several, more than six or seven, of those who were to come from Castile, have not put in an appearance, some because they lost heart, others because they were prevented by legitimate reasons, who, said reasons disappearing, we hope, will follow us later.

I wish you would speak to the prior-elect of this province, who was formerly prior of St. Paul's convent at Valladolid. He is a true servant of God, and zealous for the salvation of those people of the Indies. Urge him to use his influence in sending his friars to those countries. And inasmuch as this convent of St. Paul of Seville is very necessary to the friars, that your Highness will continue to send to the Indies, and inasmuch as every thing in this city (it is frightful) costs one-third more than in Valladolid, and consequently expenses are that much higher, I would humbly beg you to always remember it in the distributions of alms left by deceased persons, because I believe that they would do as much good to the departed donors, as if they were given for the maintainance of the friars, who go to preach the Gospel in the countries, where those funds were perhaps unlawfully accumulated. In fact, I believe that the shelter and good treatment, which the friars receive here, encourage them somewhat not to make too much of the trials, which, they generally believe, await them in the Indies. It has already happened on the contrary, that some of them got discouraged before starting because they were not treated kindly. Friars

are generally timid and they are like glass, when they go out of their convents.

In this city and all over Andalusia there are a great number of Indians unjustly held in slavery. When Licenciado Gregorio Lopez was out here to investigate, by order of His Majesty, he published an order commanding that everybody having Indians in their keeping should produce them. But many were hidden away, others were sent to the country or elsewhere. I was even informed by a person, who did so to clear his conscience, that there has been even much rascality and bribing on the part of some wicked sinners, who, for the sake of three, four, or ten ducats, did not hesitate to commit as grievous a sin against God as it is to deprive a man of his liberty, and casting many Indians in perpetual slavery by hiding the truth, or by making threats against them, if they came to Lopez, or otherwise by not informing the officers of the things, which they knew and were bound to report. The remedy that should be applied to this crying injustice, according to the opinion of the officers of this Casa de contratacion, who are, as far as I can see, very virtuous and conscientious persons, is this. Let your Highness publish an order all over this province of Andalu-

sia, that, everybody having Indian slaves, is bound to produce them within a stated time in this Casa de contratacion under penalty of having all said Indians declared free. And here, without procrastination or process of law, but according to the directions given by His Majesty, if the would-be-owner can produce a deed of sale, let the Indian be held as a slave until it can be ascertained how he, who sold the Indian, got him. For they have all been stolen and sold, on being landed here. And the Indian so held should be placed where he could earn something, wherewith to clothe himself, and put something by, to pay his way back to his native country. Otherwise he will be subjected to a thousand vexations and to much ill-treatment. I have seen a good deal of this kind of things here. Since they found out that I am here, St. Paul's convent is filled every day with Indians, who come to me under the impression that I can relieve them from their captivity and oppression. As soon as their masters find it out by their momentary absence from home, they whip them and cast them into irons.

I would take the responsibility on my conscience and answer for it to God on my deathbed, if your Highness should cause it

to be published that every Indian in these kingdoms is a free man, as by right he is. . . . . These Indians are in extreme necessity of a man employed to look after their interests, because they don't know how to ask for justice, and they have been so cowed down, that they dare not complain."

The Protector of the Indians proffers next to contribute himself twenty ducats yearly to pay a salary to a certain Diego Collantes, a good man, and the porter of the Casa de contratacion, if crown-prince Philip will only make him the legal attorney-in-fact of every Indian in Andalusia.

One more extract that sounds like a catechism lesson taught to the future king of Spain, Philip II.

"It is certainly a great responsibility of conscience to leave these Indians in this country. As they come in contact only with street loafers, immoral and vicious people, and inasmuch as they daily see the town taverns full of dissolute individuals, and are witnessing the scandals of houses of illfame, they being men, are bound soon to fall in the ways of those, with whom they consort. In their own country they live indeed better than they do here, and better than many Christians live here. I beg your Highness to fix things so that not

a man of them will remain in this kingdom."

On the 4th of May Las Casas wrote again to prince Philip. The letter begins thus: "In the five letters which I wrote you in the past few days, on account of the hurry of the postmen, and on account of many pressing occupations, I forgot to tell your Highness something that you ought to know. It is this. A letter has come from the Indies saying that the Franciscans in New Spain were writing, that no more friars were needed there. Your Highness must know that this is an artful trick of the devil, who wishes to stop the inroads that are being made in his dominions" etc.

I have quoted largely from Las Casas' correspondence at this period of his life, to show how great an ascendancy he had gained on Charles V., and especially on his son Philip. These quotations tell of quite a large number of requests made to the crown prince. The letters, every one of which was answered, speak of many more, which it would take too long to enumerate. It will be gratifying to learn that all of them were granted.

This correspondence gives us also an insight of the how and by whom the Western Continent was christianized. Immediately

after the conquest of Mexico, there began to pour into America real phalanxes of apostolic men, who left Spain every year by the hundred, and spread themselves in every nook and corner of Spanish America from New Mexico and Florida to Patagonia. They, year after year, pushed farther and farther the confines of civilization, until, at the end of the sixteenth century, scarcely a pueblo could be found over which did not tower a church steeple. The city of Seville was the Jerusalem, whence issued forth the apostles, who converted America. St. Paul's Dominican convent, where the first American priest lodged more than once, was the cenacle where thousand of apostolic men prayed and fasted and bade farewell to home and country as the Apostles had done at Jerusalem between Ascension Thursday and Pentecost Sunday. The bishops consecrated within the venerable cathedral of Seville for the American Missions could be counted by the hundred. Ancient Seville was chosen by Divine Providence to be the link connecting the new world to the old in the kingdom of God on earth.

Although as early as the 20th of April, 1544, the "ships were in hurry to sail," Las Casas did not leave Seville before the

1st of July. Why? Because there was work for him to do there. He could not leave Spain behind, without weeding out of it the pest of Indian slavery, which threatened to cast roots in the ancient dominions of his most Catholic Majesty.

Armed with the new laws, helped by the different religious communities of Andalusia, and backed by the officers of the Casa de Contratacion, he instituted wholesale prosecutions of slave holders, and did not rest until the shackles of the unfortunates were shattered. Many of these returned to the different parts of America to sing the praises of the liberator of the Indians.

It is no exaggeration to say that the first American priest had, by this time, become the best known and the most talked about man in all the Indies; by the Indians, who through the clergy had heard of him and learned to love him as their friend and protector; by the Spaniards, who hated him and looked upon him as their greatest enemy.

It would have bankrupted the bishop of Chiapa to entertain, during three months, his forty-five Dominicans and the Franciscans beside the several secular priests, who also followed him to America. As soon as it became apparent that their departure

was to be delayed almost indefinitely, the immensely wealthy duke of Medina-Sidonia, whose brother was a Dominican, entertained them all in San Lucar, where they had gathered to be ready to sail on short notice. They did not, however, spend their time in idleness. Helped by the Dominicans of Andalusia, they scattered themselves in every neighboring town and village and begged enough in cash and in kind to last them during the entire voyage. The feast of Corpus Christi was that year celebrated with unusual solemnity in San Lucar. The sixty or seventy American missioners filled the sanctuary of its parish church and swelled the chorus that sang *Pange Lingua.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

Las Casas crosses again the Atlantic to take possession of his See.

A fleet, i. e. twenty-six merchant ships, sailed from San Lucar de Barameda on the 10th of July, 1544, for the Indies. One of them was named *San Salvador*, on which bishop Las Casas and his numerous clergy had taken passage.

What beautiful reveries are aroused in the mind of the Christian student of history as he beholds the little craft *San Salvador*, (the Holy Saviour) whose figurehead is Our Lord himself calming the waves, and from whose masthead floats the emblem of Redemption! Out of those same waters,*) whence the great Genoese mariner had sailed, fifty-two years before on his *Santa Maria* (Holy Mary), now comes forth *San Salvador* freighted with the clergy of a

*) Palos on the little river Pinto and San Lucar on the Guadalquivir are but a few miles apart. Both rivers empty into the same bay.

whole diocese. But one successor of the apostles is there, but quite the number of Our Blessed Lord's disciples. A powerful man-of-war heads the fleet, on which is quartered the vice-queen of the Indies, Doña Maria de Toledo, the widowed daughter-in-law of Christopher Columbus, and the friend of Las Casas. That man-of-war carries an even more precious treasure, the remains of the *Discoverer of America.**) These had been lately extracted from their temporary resting place in the monastery of Las Cuevas near Seville, to be reburied, according to his last wishes, on the soil of Hispaniola.

The scene is inspiring, but on the picture there is a blot. On the *San Salvador* sail with Las Casas four black African slaves, and they are the property of the Protector of the Indians. The bishop of Chiapa, then seventy years of age, had not yet learned that, if it was wrong to trade in

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*) It is about certain that the remains of Columbus crossed the Atlantic on this occasion. It is certain that in 1542 they were not yet in the cathedral of San Domingo. As it is also certain that it was his devoted daughter-in-law who brought over the remains of the discoverer of America, and that she never after returned to Spain, the inference drawn in the text seems to be legitimate. The remains of Columbus were buried in the present cathedral of San Domingo, which was finished in 1544.

Indian slaves, it was wrong also to buy or sell the children of the black continent. One of his many requests to Prince Philip made between his election to the episcopal dignity and his departure for America was, that (I loathe to write it) he be allowed to import, free of duty, to the Indies, four Negro slaves.

The *San Salvador* struck bottom in clearing the bar, just outside of the port. It buldged, and became unseaworthy. But with the rising of the tide it proceeded, although in a dangerous condition, as far as Gomara, one of the Canary islands. Ten days were spent there in repairs; but most of the friars could not be persuaded to sail again on the untrustworthy *San Salvador* and took passage on some other vessels.

The port of San Domingo in Hispaniola was reached on the 9th of September, 1544, and the Dominicans of the place came processionally to meet the bishop and his clergy, who, amidst rejoicings and the singing of the *Te Deum* went to lodge in the oldest Dominican convent in America.

But, of all the people in San Domingo, the Dominicans were alone in welcoming their old fellow townsman to the city. The Henriquillo affair was forgotten, and in Las Casas the San Dominguians saw only

the author of the new laws. Even the judges of the Audiencia, except chief justice Cerrato, joined the populace in insulting demonstrations against the bishop of Chiapa. Indignation meetings were held and it was agreed to withhold the usual alms which the Dominicans collected from door to door according to the rules of the mendicant orders. Threats of all kinds were made, and insults offered to the Protector of the Indians. He suffered all in silence for the love of God, and at one time thought of removing to the Franciscan convent to relieve the Dominicans from the embarrassing position in which his presence had placed them. But, *cui bono?* It would only transfer the persecution from one to another religious community, and the idea was abandoned. But not an hour did he waver in his resolve to leave nothing undone to stamp out Indian slavery. Only six days had passed when he wrote to Prince Philip to acquaint him with the details of his reception. In words of fire the kidnappers of Indians are denounced, "who steal them on the continent, to sell them in Hispaniola and Cuba." "By fraud," he said, "they succeeded often to brand them with the royal brand itself." Bitter complaints that the proper persons

were not chosen to fill the offices, and to execute the laws, fill another page of the long letter. "A deputation of Spaniards, amongst them some friars," Las Casas wrote, "are on the road to Spain, to appeal to his Majesty against the new laws. Should it be decided to consider their appeal, let them be detained until I shall have a chance to answer them. I am ready to meet them wherever and whenever you should command me."

The bishop of Chiapa could not afford to draw on the cargo of provisions brought over from Spain, because it was yet a long journey by water and by land from San Domingo to Chiapa, during which nearly one hundred persons were to be fed. The ostracism, or, if the word may be used, the boycotting of the Dominicans by the San Dominguians had brought the community to the last extremity. In their dire necessities, they had recourse to God. In relays of eight and ten the days and nights were spent in church, to implore the Divine assistance. It came. The Franciscans began quietly to furnish meals to the Sons of St. Dominic, and an old negro-woman undertook to make daily rounds of the houses where lived the few God fearing people, and her collections improved from day to

day. From which it appears, that a portion of the population were after all the friends of religion and of justice. Among these must be numbered chief justice Cerrato, who at all times sided with the friars in endeavoring to enforce the new laws. Vice-queen Maria de Toledo could also have given material assistance to the bishop and the friars. But her having arrived in the company of Las Casas, and of her own brother, who was a Dominican, drew upon her the anger of the populace, and, in spite of her kinship to his Catholic Majesty, she too was for a time boycotted in her own capital.

Nothing daunted, the Protector of the Indians presented himself before the Audiencia, and, in the name of the king, summoned the judges to set free all the Indians on the Island. But an immemorial custom and the practice of jurisprudence had confirmed to the subjects of the Spanish crown the ancient right of protesting to the king against newly enacted laws, whenever they thought them prejudicial to their liberties or their interests. When this was done, the new legislation remained in abeyance, until the protest was accepted or rejected. "Let the laws," said the judges of the Audiencia, whose principal

wealth consisted in slaves, "be obeyed, but not enforced." And a deputation was appointed to go to the king and to have them repealed or amended. This legal subterfuge postponed in most places the emancipation of the Indians almost indefinitely.

Pedro de Cordova had died, Montesino was elsewhere and new friars tenanted the Dominican convent. Their sermons had no longer the ring of those preached thirty years before in the presence of Diego Columbus. For several years past they had preserved a discreet silence on the subject of Indian slavery. Some few of the Dominicans in the Indies had even doubted if the opinion so universally prevalent among interested Spanish settlers, that the Indians were natural slaves (*servi a natura*) might not be the true one.

History will scarcely prove more useful than romance unless we draw some lessons from it. Had the clergy of these southern states of the American union, presented, during the past one hundred years, a more solid front, had they been bolder and less discreet, much oppression and tyranny would have been prevented. A few of us would have fallen by the assassin's bullets, a few necks would perhaps have been twisted, but for every martyr's life a

thousand would have been saved of the inferior race, whose lot was cast by Providence in our midst.

The arrival of the Protector of the Indians in Hispaniola aroused the drooping spirits of the Dominicans and their zeal. On the first feast day following, a sermon was preached in the cathedral, during which, though timidly and in veiled phrases, the orator condemned Indian slavery. Promptly a committee, appointed by the town council and by the cathedral chapter, presented themselves to the preacher and to Father Tomas Casilla, his superior, to protest against it. They enlarged on the disturbances that would follow if the subject of Indian slavery was not ignored in the pulpit; the friars allowed themselves to be bulldozed, and promised to keep silence on the subject. But, to use the words of a modern biographer, no sooner had the committee left the convent, than the Fathers felt ashamed of their cowardice and scarcely dared to look each other in the face. The following Sunday Tomas Casilla himself ascended the pulpit, and in terms that could not be misunderstood, denounced the owners of Indian slaves. He felt like never to end that sermon; for during its delivery ill sup-

pressed murmurs of disapproval were heard in the church itself, while groups of angry men formed outside of it to discuss it. The proposition was even advanced of shooting the preacher through a window of the church. For all that Casilla ascended the pulpit once more on All Saints day, this time, not in the cathedral, for it had been shut against him, but in his own convent church, and delivered a second sermon on the same subject. His apostolic fearlessness was rewarded ; a change of sentiments began to leaven rapidly among the people at large, and in three months time, which were spent by Las Casas in San Domingo, the rabid and wealthy slave owners lost their hold on the masses and found themselves in the minority.

Meanwhile widow Solano, who was thought to be the richest person in Hispaniola, called at the convent to tell the fathers that their sermons had opened her eyes, and that she was convinced that slavery was a mortal sin. Her two hundred slaves were emancipated at once, and her wealth was placed at the disposal of Las Casas for the maintainance of the missioners during their stay in San Domingo, and to help supporting them in Chiapa. Mrs. Solano's example and the exemplary

lives of the friars under trying circumstances, worked so great a revolution of sentiments in the city that their departure for Chiapa was generally regretted.

A solemn High Mass was celebrated that morning by a friar of the convent, with as deacon and subdeacon, two fathers from the monastery of the Franciscans, after which, the celebrant made to the bishop and to his clergy a touching farewell address. Then headed by cross and acolytes and accompanied by the Franciscan and Dominican communities, the bishop of Chiapa and his clergy, secular and regular, proceeded processionally, through the streets of San Domingo, to the ship that was to land them in Yucatan. The voyage would have probably ended disastrously, owing to the ignorance and carelessness of the captain, who travelled with his newly wedded wife, had it not been for Las Casas, who was no mean mariner, and practically took charge of the vessel.

A landing was made on the day of the Epiphany, 1545, at the port of San Lazaro (Campeche). The diocese of Chiapa, roughly speaking, was bounded on the east by the Atlantic ocean, on the north by the diocese of Oaxaca, on the west by the Pacific ocean, and on the south by Guate-

mala. The province of Tuzulutlan had been added to it at the request of Las Casas himself, who remarked on a certain occasion, that his jurisdiction comprised the half of New Spain. Campeche was within its limits, and on landing at the port of San Lazaro the bishop of Chiapa had at last set foot on soil that was in his own diocese. Accordingly the parish priest of the place, accompanied by many Spaniards and a multitude of Indians in canoes, came to meet their bishop on board his ship. Those among the natives who were yet pagans presented themselves naked, while the Christians wore a coarse cotton blanket. It was late in the day before the church was reached, and only one Mass was celebrated, at which bishop, priests and people assisted. Then the Spaniards first, and then the Indians were admitted to kiss the episcopal ring.

The Dominicans went to lodge in different houses and were treated everywhere courteously and with generous hospitality. Every Sunday one of them preached in the church; but, by order of the bishop, who wished to take possession of his diocese peacefully, refrained from touching on the subject of slavery. Every day at the sound of the bell the whole community gathered

in the church to recite the office in common, as if they were living in a well regulated monastery. The governor of Yucatan happened to be absent, but his lieutenant, on being notified by courier of the arrival of the bishop, sent word from Merida, that he and the clergy be treated as well as princes of the royal blood should be. In fact the friars were not only provided with all the necessaries and comforts which the country afforded, but were loaded with presents. Their superior fearing that so much generosity on the part of the slave-owners should tie their tongues, when the time to speak should arrive, ended by gathering them all together and reducing them to the regularity of community life.

The Spaniards, in order to comply with the orders of the governor, treated the bishop with an outward show of politeness and deference. But Las Casas, while abstaining from speaking in public on the subject of slavery, let no occasion pass to admonish his flock in private about the wrong done to the Indians, and the necessity of enforcing the new laws. The slave-owners, who long before his arrival, knew how large a hand the bishop had in framing them, listened, but not a slave did they free. Purposely misinterpreting

the decrees, by which he was authorized to take possession of his see, they refused to acknowledge him as their bishop, and to pay him the tithes that had accrued since the time he had set sail from San Lucar. Another decree, delivered by him to the officers of the crown, directed them to pay certain sums that were due him. On the same pretext it was also ignored, and the bishop found himself in the impossibility of settling with the captain of the ship for the passage of himself and his suite from San Domingo. The friars came to his rescue by disposing of a part of the goods brought over from Spain, while the parish priest loaned the bishop one hundred castellanos. With these, and his note for the balance, the bishop of Chiapa succeeded in proceeding to his see.

The distance was yet great, and it was found almost impossible to transport by land what was left of the provisions, the equipages and the large packages of ecclesiastical goods destined for the churches to be erected in the new diocese. These were loaded on an old flatbottomed craft with the intention of coasting along the shore as far as the Tabasco river, on which they could be transported to within a short distance of the city of Chiapa. Twelve of the friars

sailed on the rickety flat, and two days later when the bishop and the other passengers were ready to board a faster vessel to follow them, a courier brought the news that their companions had been shipwrecked, that nine of them had been drowned, and that the others were sheltered in Champoton, an Indian village near the shore. Provisions, vestments, church vessels, all were lost. The news of the catastrophe so terrified the friars, grouped around the bishop, that at first they refused to go with him further by water. But the venerable prelate, pointing to the clear skies, to the favorable winds, to the new boat, succeeded at last in gathering them on board. They sat down downcast and mute, without as much as looking at each other. Not a wink had they slept, not a morsel had they eaten, not a word spoken in twenty-four hours, when the captain pointed out to them the wreck. Then they rose on deck, and, amidst tears and sobs, chanted the *de profundis* and went through the office for the dead.

The 35th, 36th, and 37th verses of the XXVII. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles describes a beautiful scene in the life of St. Paul. It was repeated on board the ship, on which Las Casas travelled. The bishop

of Chiapa could bear no longer the pusillanimity of his travelling companions. He himself drew out of the pantry bread, wine, and what victuals he could find, set them on the table, sat down, and by word and example shamed the friars into partaking of some food. Courage and cheerfulness were thus reestablished. But at the first sign of an approaching gale he directed the captain to look for shelter, which was found behind Carmen Island, where they landed. Three days passed before the weather subsided, and then Las Casas, in the company of his faithful companion, Father Ladrada, and two other friars, proceeded by water on his journey, reaching Ciudad Real de Chiapa safely. The other Dominicans ended their trying voyage by land during the month of February, 1545.

Ciudad Real de Chiapa was the white man's town, and Chiapa itself was an old Indian pueblo a few miles away. The reception given to the bishop was about on the same plan (which seems to have been preconcerted) as that received in Campeche. There was an outward show of polite consideration and generosity, while an undercurrent of opposition to the prelate's ideas and administration was felt during the first days after his arrival. As no episcopal

palace had yet been provided, the bishop was assigned the well appointed, but vacant residence of an absent Spaniard, nearby the convent which had been built for the friars.

The real sentiments of the Whites about their new bishop must be gathered from the letter dated in Guatemala the 10th of September, 1543, which I gave in a former chapter. All the slave-owners in the Indies were interested in making his administration a failure, in order to destroy his influence at court; and letters poured into Ciudad Real encouraging and spurring its residents to resist the pretensions of the Protector of the Indians. One of these, quoted by Remesal, affords a sample of the others. "People say here that the sins of your country must be very grievous indeed, when God thought it necessary to punish them by sending you that antichrist (Las Casas) for a bishop."

An attempt was made to practically modify his views on Indian slavery, by making him a participant of the fruits thereof. There was at first lavishness in their hospitality; and the bishop was plainly given to understand, by deeds, if not by words, that his episcopal see would prove a sufficiently soft one, if he would

but consent to leave matters in *statu quo*. The bait unfortunately had proved too tempting to many of the American prelates. Even his lordship of Guatemala, the energetic and zealous Marroquin, the heretofore friend of Las Casas, who had shared his opinions, had succumbed to its allurements, and was now enjoying the revenues of a Repartimiento. Las Casas too was but a child of Eve, thought the Spaniards of Ciudad Real, and perhaps he would yet see that his humanitarian theories, which in Spain he had succeeded in imposing on the ruling powers, were utopians and impracticable in America. They were not left long undeceived.

The ecclesiastical affairs of Chiapa were found to be in a deplorable condition, as might have been expected. Erected into a diocese several years before, Chiapa had never yet seen a bishop. A poorly built, small, and unattractive church was called the cathedral, which was served by only two clergymen, the Dean of the chapter, Gil Quintana, and the Canon Juan Perera. Besides the parish priest of Campeche, who was, as far as known, a worthy ecclesiastic, there were only three other secular priests, who were young and had no particular charge. One of them travelled about,

from pueblo to pueblo, baptizing Indians, for the revenues that the business afforded. The second was a partner in a sugar plantation, attending to the cultivation of the cane, while the third filled the office of a Calpixque, the name given by the Indians to the collector of the tributes, which were paid by them to the owners of the Encomiendas. The bishop summoned all three of them to live with him, in order to enforce on them ecclesiastical discipline, and to employ them in the work of the ministry. They were paid, out of the bishop's revenues, a small salary, and sat at the same table with him. Las Casas, in becoming a bishop, had not given up the strict primitive rule of his Order, and never ate flesh meat, which however he supplied scantily to his guests. His monastic habits, his strict application to duty, and perhaps the exacting exercise of authority did not suit two of the young men. One of them, on account of a slight misunderstanding with the vicar general, (a Spaniard who had come from Spain with the bishop) left the diocese, disregarding Las Casas' wishes, and died shortly after. The second unfrocked himself and died on the gallows as a criminal, in Nicaragua. The Fathers

of Mercy were already established in Chiapa, when the first American priest became its bishop; but the views of most of them on the subject of slavery did not agree with those of the prelate, and consequently not much use could be made of them in the proper administration of the diocese.

The bishop of Chiapa, though coleric, impetuous, and very plainspoken, whenever it was a question of correcting abuses, or the outrages perpetrated against the Indians, was as meek as a lamb, and as humble as a child in the ordinary dealings with his flock. The natives especially had, at all times, free access to his lordship, who shared with them their sorrows and their sufferings. Wooden were the spoons and forks on his table, and the dishes plain earthenware. After mass and his morning devotions, the hours of the day were given to his clergy and to his people, while at night several more were spent in study and in writing. Great was his abiding trust in God, as all his works show, and his habit of prayer was constant. His never ending supplication was that the Father of mercies might enlighten the minds and touch the hearts of the hardened sinners of his diocese, who could not hope

to obtain salvation, while their oppression of the Indians lasted, and their thirst for illgotten wealth endured. His life in Chiapa was sad indeed. A handful of his countrymen held in slavery thousands of the natives, whose shackles he was powerless to break. Daily swarms of these unfortunates filled his house, knelt around him, and kissing the hem of his white habit, their eyes swollen with weeping, detailed in touching and endearing words the cruelties of their masters, protesting at the same time that they had been enslaved unjustly, and in spite of the laws that the white men themselves had made. The Protector of the Indians would then visit this, that, and that other Spaniard to beg, to entreat, or to threaten. But all in vain. The reader needs not be told of the style of his sermons on Sundays and feast days. They reminded the listener, sometime of the persuasive, winning ways of a St. Francis de Sales, but more frequently, especially in his perorations, of the eloquence of St. Ambrose when threatening Theodosius with eternal damnation, unless penance was done for the slaughter of the people of Thessalonica. His words fell on the roadside or on rocks.

Easter was approaching, and all the

Spaniards meant to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist; for, in those days of faith, not to comply with this precept of the Church was to become a social outcast, little better than a Mahommedan. Nevertheless they continued in open rebellion against their bishop, and defied his authority. They had learned to know that if was useless to entice him with gold or a life of ease, while their conduct had at last convinced Las Casas, that none but drastic measures would avail to soften the hardness of their hearts.

Accordingly just before Passion Sunday the bishop withdrew the faculties for hearing confessions from every priest in the city, secular and regular, except two. These were the Dean and the one Canon of his cathedral chapter. The Fathers of Mercy were excluded, because it was known, that most of them were of the opinion that the Indians were *servi a natura*. The faculties of the friars and of the secular priests, who had lately arrived from Spain, were also suspended because, being unacquainted with the country and the relations existing between the white and the red men, they were not thought to be competent confessors.

At the same time the bishop placed in

the hands of the Dean and of the Canon a long list of sins, the absolution from which he reserved to himself. Briefly it meant that the two authorized confessors could not absolve 1st any white man who was in possession of real or legal slaves; 2nd of any owner of a Repartimiento, unless he was willing to set all his Indians free, and to make restitution of all wealth or property accumulated through their enforced labor.

During the first days of passion week the Canon and the Dean were busy hearing confessions. The former simply and faithfully complied with the injunction of his bishop, but the latter, notwithstanding his solemn promise to do likewise, every time he stumbled on one of the reserved cases, sent the penitent to the bishop with a note, saying: "*The bearer has some cases reserved by your lordship, although I do not find them reserved in the jus canonicum or in any of the moral theologians.*"

The Spaniards were therefore left to choose between excommunication (failure to perform one's Easter duties, to use a modern expression, was punished with nothing less) and giving up the bulk of their accumulated wealth. Like the slave-owners of the southern states of the American Union before and during the

war of secession, they were convinced that their sugar plantations and their mines would become worthless without the enforced labor of the Indians. Experience taught that it was a mistaken notion, but a conviction it was, and the Guatemalans acted upon it. In either case, excommunication or expropriation meant their ruin, and it was decided to leave not a stone unturned to avoid both.

First the Dean, and then the Fathers of Mercy, waited on the bishop to see if by arguments and persuasion they might not shake his resolution to carry matters to extremes. But to no purpose. The bishop answered that it was not in his power to declare, that one portion of his flock was bound to work and perish to enrich the other, which was but a small minority. Had not the Protector of the Indians studied for thirty years, had he not suffered, spent a fortune and risked his life, time and again, to solve the momentous problem of Indian slavery? And now that the best theologians, the ablest jurists in Christendom, the universities and, at last, the supreme power of the Spanish nation had declared that he was right, and slavery wrong, shall he disgrace his old age, and abandon the

American race to oppression and ultimate extermination?

The civil authorities had no jurisdiction over the bishop, but according to a custom that prevailed for centuries among the Spaniards, the Guatemalans availed themselves of what they called the right to *requerir*, that is, to summon the bishop in the name of ecclesiastical law, to show cause why he should not grant permission to confessors to absolve them. The *requerimiento*, or summons were served in the following manner. An instrument was drawn up in proper legal form, and properly acknowledged before, and countersigned by a notary public. The sum total of the argument made in it was that Pope Alexander VI. having granted the Indies to the Spanish crown, they, the Conquistadores, acting in the name of the king, had waged war against the Indians, and that therefore the prisoners made during said wars, were their lawful property and legal slaves.

Of course the plea was founded on a false premise. But the *requerimiento*, which was presented and read to the bishop by a deputation of the people, ended with a threat, that, unless their request was complied with, complaints would be lodged against him before the Metropolitan, the

archbishop of Mexico, the king and the pope.

Remesal has preserved us the answer made by Las Casas.

"Oh ye blind men, how woefully has satan deceived you. Why do you threaten me with your appeals to the archbishop, the king and the pope? Know ye, that, were I not compelled by the law of God to do as I am doing, and you to obey me, you would yet be bound by the just laws of your king, whose faithful vassals you pretend to be."

Drawing then forth the new laws, he read to them the statutes relating to Indian slavery and continued. "Not you of me, but I have a right to complain to the king of you, who do not obey his laws." The spokesman of the committee answered that a protest against those laws had been sent to the king, and that therefore they should be allowed to remain in abeyance until he should have accepted or rejected their remonstrances. The bishop retorted: "Your argument would hold good, were not these laws founded on the laws of God, and were it not an act of natural justice to set free these Indians, who have been tyrannically enslaved."

Nothing came of the *requerimiento*, and popular clamor succeeded to legal proceedings. The blackest calumnies were resorted to, in order to vilify the prelate. The bishop was called a glutton and a disciple of Boccaccio. He was better fitted, it was said, to manage a tile or a brick yard than to govern a diocese, which meant that he was an unlettered and an ignorant man. It was even whispered around that he was suspected of heresy. The new laws, as interpreted by him, were but a pretext in his hands to prevent the ministration of the sacraments, as the reformists were then doing in Germany and elsewhere.

Cartoons had not yet been invented, but ditties caricaturing the venerable prelate were composed and taught to street urchins, who sang them under the windows of the episcopal residence. A villain went so far as to discharge a blank cartridge from the streets into the apartments of the bishop, hoping thus to intimidate him.

The Dominican Fathers were the only consolation of Las Casas. On Holy Thursday one of them preached, and his theme was in keeping and according to his ideas. The only effect of the sermon however, was to draw on the friars the hatred which the people nursed against the bishop. Shortly

after Easter the governor of Ciudad Real wrote to Charles V. and gave him a one-sided and calumnious account of the state of things in the town. The letter has been preserved, of which I'll give the following: "From the letter I wrote you from Coatzacoalcos your Majesty knows already how Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, the bishop of this city, and, as he says, of half of this New Spain, has landed in Yucatan . . . . Of ten friars dispatched by him to precede him, only one was saved, and I dare say, and could almost swear to your Majesty, that the citizens of this town would have preferred that the bishop had drowned, instead of the friars, even if these had been French . . . .*) The flames of discord went so high in this city during the Holy week that it was observed as if the people were not Christians. The people are so excited that I don't know how to describe it to your Majesty, and the bishop is so rude and so stubborn in his fixed ideas, that he says that even if His Majesty or His Holiness the Pope should so direct and command, he would not desist from his

*) On account of the several wars between France and Spain, and because of the French privateers, or corsairs, who made travelling in American waters very dangerous, Spaniards had grown accustomed to look upon Frenchmen as little better than Turks.

undertaking, because it concerns the spiritual welfare of New Spain and of the king himself, on whom he represents himself as having such an ascendency that, as he tells it around, as if for a pastime, he himself had caused the change of policy in the council of the Indies, and the enactment of the recent laws effecting New Spain and Peru . . . ."

The governor told the truth as far as the disturbances of Holy week were concerned. Dean Gil Quintana had caused them by admitting to Holy Communion several slave-owners, who had sold and bought Indians publicly during those very days. His uncanonical conduct gave great scandal, and threatened to dethrone episcopal authority. Las Casas decided that a stop must be put to it, and began by endeavoring to administer a paternal admonition. The Dean was invited to dine with his lordship the day after Easter, and the bishop was notified that the invitation was accepted. His non-appearance, at the time appointed, nettled the prelate, who sent him word that his presence was needed. The Dean pleaded an indisposition and did not answer the call. A second and a third messenger was sent with no better effect. Then Las Casas peremptorily summoned the recalcitrant

Dean to appear before him under penalty, of what ecclesiastical censure is not known. Gil Quintana received the summons, dressed and walking about, but folded the paper, put it in his pocket and disregarded its contents.

The Protector of the Indians (who confesses in more than one passage of his works his being of a choleric temperament) without more ado, ordered his Alguacil*) to proceed to the Dean's house, and arrest him. The going in and out of messengers from the bishop's to the priest's house had attracted the attention of the busybodies of the town, who gathered to see what would happen. The Dean, forced by the Alguacil to come out of his house, made frantic efforts to escape, and cried aloud: "help me, gentlemen, help me, and I will hear the confessions of you all and give you absolution."

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*) A kind of episcopal marshal employed by bishops to enforce ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The ecclesiastical tribunals, recognized as they were by the civil powers, had their own executives as our civil courts have their sheriffs, to enforce their sentences. When however the officers of an ecclesiastical court proved insufficient to execute the sentences of the judges, recourse was had to the secular arm. A little over a century ago every episcopal curia in a Catholic country had its own jail, in which refractory ecclesiastics were confined.

The alcalde, or the mayor of the town, happened to be in the crowd, and yelled: "*aqui del rey!*" which had the same effect as if, in time of siege, somebody should cry: "Treason, citizens, treason!"

In a few minutes every Spaniard was on the spot armed to his teeth. The Dean was set free, while sentinels guarded the entrances to the Dominican convent to prevent the friars from going to the assistance of the bishop. Meanwhile a motley crowd, headed by the promoters of the demonstration, had penetrated into the episcopal residence, yelling all the while: "*Aqui del rey, aqui del rey!*" Father Medenilla, one of the Dominicans, and nothing less than a knight of Salamanca, who happened to be in the front apartments of the house, endeavored to pacify the angry crowd, when the bishop, attracted by the noise, was seen coming to face the rioters. He was forced back into his own apartments by the Dominicans, but meanwhile the leading spirits of the mob had also gained access to the room, all speaking and vociferating at the same time. It was pandemonium. The scoundrel, who, some days before, had shot a blank cartridge into the house to frighten him, went so far as to swear there and then

that he would yet kill him. Las Casas spoke not a word, but when the storm had spent itself, and there was silence in the room, looked them fixedly in the face, and then, with words not of contempt but of pity and forgiveness, dismissed them from his presence after administering to them a fatherly admonition.

That night there was more than one Spanish Hidalgo moping in his room, and thoroughly ashamed of himself for having taken part in the day's riotous proceedings against the bishop.

At a late hour the people had come to their senses, and officers proffered to go in pursuit of the outlawed Dean, and to re-arrest him.

But Las Casas preferred to let him go in peace, not however without suspending and excommunicating him.

Next day several of the Dominican fathers visited the bishop, and begged him to leave Ciudad Real, for a while at least, because they feared that the threats, made against his life the day before, might be carried out. "But Fathers, where do you wish me to go?" answered the Protector of the Indians. "Where shall my life be out of danger as long as I continue to advocate the liberty of these helpless

ones? If my own interests were at stake, I would gladly abandon them, that peace and quiet might be re-established; but I am defending the cause of these miserable Indians, crushed and oppressed by unjust slavery and unbearable tributes, which other members of my flock are exacting of them. Here I wish to remain, where is my church, which I accepted as a groom his bride; I must not abandon it. This episcopal residence is the fortress entrusted to my keeping, and should they kill me, I wish to consecrate it with my blood, that it may stimulate zeal in others for the house of God, and be made fertile and bear fruits of justice and peace, instead of the injustice, that now stains and disfigures my diocese. This, Fathers, is my wish and my irrevocable determination. But I shall not be so fortunate, as to see the citizens of this town carry out their threats. Other times I found myself surrounded by greater perils, but, on account of my shortcomings, God snatched from my hands the crown of martyrdom. The riotous conduct of the Conquistadores and the venomous hatred they bear me, are of long standing. Their insults wound me no longer, neither do I fear their threats. The insults of

yesterday were mild and moderate, compared to the affronts I had to bear at their hands in former days both in Spain and in these Indies."

The bishop was yet conversing with his visitors, when four other Fathers rushed in the room to tell him, that the man, who had threatened his life the day before, had been stabbed. Las Casas arose and invited the friars to go with him to the assistance of the wounded criminal. A surgeon was sent for at once, and while his companions busied themselves in stemming the blood that flowed from the open wounds, Las Casas prepared with his own hands the fillets used in bandaging them. Four hours he remained by the side of the sick man, showering his attentions upon him, as if he had been his own brother. It was the vengeance of a worthy bishop. The criminal asked a thousand pardons, became a good Christian, and the lifelong friend of the Protector of the Indians.

The Spaniards of Ciudad Real made the life of the Dominicans unbearable and impossible. The tactics adopted against them in San Domingo were repeated in Chiapa, and the usual alms collected daily from door to door were no longer forthcoming.

It was decided to seek another field for their work, not however without preaching a farewell sermon to the Spaniards. Their departure, the preacher told them, was caused by the hardness of their hearts, and by their sins. It did no good to the slave-owners, who, though they considered the friars their enemies, were angered at being told the truth. The neighboring pueblo of Chiapa was visited, and, as both the owner of the Encomienda and the Indians themselves, showed great desire to see the Fathers established in their midst, it was decided to build a convent there. The bishop was invited to bless the corner stone of the church, and, of course the entire community accompanied him to the ancient Indian village. But before taking the road one of the Fathers preached once more in Ciudad Real. The Spaniards were told that, after all, the bishop's opinion, that it was unjust to enslave the Indians, was not so unusual. Bishop Marroquin, when a simple parish priest, had held it. So did the renowned Father Betanzos, so did the Franciscans very generally etc. Although it was safer to keep on the beaten road when travelling through the mountains, it was safer to keep on the narrow path that led to heaven. But it was like preaching to the winds.

Thousands of Indians flocked, from many miles around, to the reception given by them to Las Casas in their pueblo of Chiapa. They met him a good hour's walk from the town, decked for the occasion with rare and costly plumage and with golden chains and bracelets of curious workmanship. They carried in their hands crosses made of feathers and flowers. No sooner had the bishop settled down in the house assigned to him, that delegation after delegation came from different villages to beg that the Fathers be sent to them to teach them the Christian religion. The heart of the Protector of the Indians overflowed with joy, and turning to the Dominicans, he addressed them in the following vein: "Will you now believe me? Is not this what I told you in Salamanca? Write to your brothers, and tell them of the great need, that these poor souls have of their ministration; encourage them to come here and explain to them that, while the hardships are great, the harvest to be gathered is greater. It is now easier for them to come, as they will find you here ready to receive them. . . . . As what I told you in Castile has proved true, experience has taught me to hope in Our Lord that what I have prophesied to you

in Campeche, the eve of the Epiphany, namely that the work we have undertaken for God's sake among the Spaniards, will yet be crowned with success, will also prove true. After all the faith inherited from their ancestors, the noble Spanish character, and over every thing else, the grace of God is not dead in them. It was God's providence that guided you here for their salvation, and God's designs shall not be frustrated. You preach the word of God, and Isaias says that God's words are never spoken in vain." But even these passing joys of the Protector of the Indians were not free from sorrow. Not a few Indians had come to tell their father the cruelty of their masters at Ciudad Real, but the officers of the law had barred their way. Nay many of them had been punished for attempting to approach him. These revelations were made to him in Chiapa.

Some of the Dominicans established themselves permanently in Chiapa, others formed a community at another pueblo called Cinacatlan, and others in Capanabastla. In a few weeks nearly all of them had been distributed by their superior, Father Thomas Casilla, throughout the diocese to attend to the evangelization of the natives.

Las Casas himself returned to Ciudad Real to make the necessary preparations for another long journey. His destination was Gracias a Dios, on the Atlantic coast of Honduras, where an Audiencia, or court of appeal, had lately been established for the convenience of the numerous settlements that had sprung up in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Yucatan. Las Casas had been, to a great extent, instrumental in having it established, and some, if not all of its judges had been appointed by his recommendation. The long and perilous journey was undertaken for two reasons. The first was to ask the assistance of the secular arm to enable him to enforce ecclesiastical discipline, and put an end to the riotous proceedings in his episcopal city; and the second to assist at the consecration of a new bishop for the diocese of Nicaragua, to which the bishop of Guatemala had also been invited.

The bishop had not been many days in Ciudad Real, when a bitter disappointment almost destroyed the fair prospects of an abundant harvest of souls, that seemed to be ripe in Chiapa, and in the other missions established by the Dominicans. News reached him that the owner of the Repartimiento of Chiapa, either at the in-

stigation of the Spaniards of Ciudad Real, or because he had realized that the friars would not prove pliable tools in his hands to his own aggrandizement, had turned their enemy. In fact he had already gone so far as to represent to them, that other provinces, especially Mexico City and its surrounding towns, would afford a better field for their talents and abilities. His Indians, he urged, were naturally stupid and could never be converted into real Christians. Every obstacle was thrown in the way of the friars to obstruct their work of evangelization, and evidently nothing would have been more welcomed by the Spanish Hidalgo than the departure of the Fathers from the pueblo. As other tactics did not avail to rid himself of them, he did not hesitate to invent before both the white and the red man, the blackest calumnies against them.

The sudden appearance of the white man on his flying monster (the horses) with the lightning in his hand (fire arms) had enshrouded the Spaniards, in the minds of the natives, in a supernatural atmosphere almost everywhere in Mexico and Central America. The Encomenderos (owners of Encomiendas) did not fail to encourage the superstitious dread that the

Indians had conceived for the new-comers, in order to bring them into abject and more than servile subjection to their every whim. On the contrary, one of the first cares of the Missioners was to teach the Indians the truth, and gradually lead their converts to assert their manhood. Hence complications and misunderstandings, that would appear ludicrous and amusing, were not the motives, and causes that led to them cruel and despicable. The following from Remesal gives us a hint of the relations that often existed in those early days between the clergy, whose mission was to civilize and christianize the aborigines, and the Encomenderos of many a Repartimiento, especially in remote and out of the way places, whose only object in life was to enrich themselves with the labor of the Indians. We shall learn why the Encomendero of Chiapa and the Dominicans fell out so soon.

One day an unusually bright Indian addressed the Fathers as follows: "Fathers, we are loosing our wits under your instruction. When you first came here, our lord told us that he had written a letter to the emperor, his brother, asking that he send you here to say Mass for us, and that you came here to obey his orders. He has told

us since that you were very poor people, and because you had nothing in your own country, you had come here to be supported by us. He has commanded us not to give you the wherewiths to build a convent and a church. On the contrary you taught us not to call him *our lord*, because there is only one Lord, the God of Heaven, whom you preach to us. You told us also that he is a mortal man like ourselves, that he is subject to the emperor, the king of Castile, and that the alcaldes of Ciudad Real can punish him; while he tells us that he is next to God, and that no one else is his superior. I do not understand you; you speak ill of our lord, and he speaks ill of you, while at the same time we see you consorting together, as if you were friends, although not one of you dares tell us in his presence what you teach us in his absence. If you pride yourself in being called truthful men, speak clearly, because your way of doing has wrapped us, as it were, in a cloud of smoke."

Happily the Dominicans persevered in their work, and in the course of time succeeded, both in Chiapa, which is now the southernmost state of the Republic of Mexico, and in Guatemala, to christianize the masses of the aboriginal race. As early

as the year 1562, when many of the companions of Las Casas were yet living, a system of feudalism had been established with here and there a Cacique, a Spaniard or a Spanish American as lord, to whom moderate tributes were paid, while over vast areas, as in the land of war, the Indians acknowledged as their lord the Spanish king alone. The missioners had, by this time, relaxed to some extent from their stiff and uncompromising attitude towards their countrymen, and these, from the exemplary life of the Fathers and from their constant preaching had learned to treat the natives as men. All of which can be gathered from a letter of Las Casas written about 1562 to those same missioners in answer to a joint one of theirs, which they had addressed to him in Spain.

It was about the first of June 1545 when Las Casas set out on his journey to Gracias a Dios. Quite a number of persons accompanied him; three Dominicans, one of the canons of the cathedral, who had come with him from Spain, Gregorio de Pasquera, Rodrigo Lopez and some other laymen. He could have chosen a shorter and an easier route to the Atlantic coast, but preferred to travel through the mountainous regions of Tuzulutlan, the land of war,

in order to revisit the scenes of his former labors and the numerous children he had there begot in Christ. The Dominican Fathers had, by this time, located in several pueblos, in each of which could be seen, towering over every other, the house of God. They came a long way to meet their former brother, their bishop, and the founder of their flourishing missions, to embrace him, and to shed tears of joy with him. How touchingly must have each of them detailed to the venerated Protector of the Indians the religious progress of his own particular locality. Next came the Caciques of the entire province. To each of them Las Casas delivered an authenticated copy of the decree, signed by Charles V. himself, insuring to him forever, his freedom, his lands, and the non-interference, by white men, in his home affairs. The chiefs thanked him for having made them Christians without the shedding of blood or the loss of their liberty. Not a Christian native failed to visit the Protector of the Indians on this occasion, and each brought to him some little present of the best that the country afforded.

The mission assigned by divine providence to Las Casas was a strange one. Nearly all of his long life's hours of hap-

piness were spent with the untutored children of America, while it fell to his lot to wage a war against his own countrymen, that lasted for more than fifty years. In Tuzulutlan, one of his travelling companions, the canon of his cathedral, tired of that life of hardships, abandoned him and went to Guatemala, where he was received and sheltered by bishop Marroquin. From the letter, which I am about to quote, it appears that the two prelates of Guatemala and of Chiapa must have met somewhere in Tuzulutlan, and very probably the canon, after some altercation with Las Casas, offered his services to his lordship of Guatemala, which were accepted. Certain it is that the friendship between Las Casas and Marroquin ended with their visit to Tuzulutlan in 1545.

The canon, on reaching Guatemala must not have been in a very apostolic frame of mind, and his falling out with his former bishop must have been well known to the citizens of Santiago de los Caballeros. These had learned from the canon, and probably also from bishop Marroquin, that Las Casas had gone to Gracias a Dios for the express purpose of bringing pressure to bear on the Audiencia to enforce at once the new laws. Accordingly they decided

to compel, by intimidation, the Protector of the Indians to desist from his undertaking. An insulting letter was written, in which the Bishop of Chiapa was called a traitor to his country and to the Christians. He was also told that a body of men were ready in Guatemala to ambush him on his way back from Gracias a Dios, to arrest him and to deliver him to Gonzalo Pizarro or to his aid-de-camp Francisco de Carbajal,*) who would do short work with him. The erstwhile canon of the cathedral of Ciudad Real had the weakness to sign that letter. Bishop Marroquin was to be present at the consecration of the bishop of Nicaragua, but after visiting Tuzulutlan returned to Guatemala without going to Gracias a Dios. The following extract

*) The youngest of the four Pizarros was then at the head of an army in Peru in open rebellion against the Spanish crown. His aid-de-camp Francisco de Carbajal is one of the most remarkable figures in early American history. Trained under the renowned general Gonzalo de Cordova he had soldiered in Italy, France and Spain for forty years. In America he became a sort of free-lance and fought in Peru with the leaders of several factions. Brave, fearless, and cruel, he was withal the greatest wit and his lance the most dreaded in all the Indies. He was taken prisoner with Pizarro at the battle of Xaquixaguana the 9th of April, 1548, and died next day on the scaffold at the age of 83 after a confession that lasted the whole of an afternoon.

from a letter of his, dated the 17th of August, 1545, throws considerable light on the events of that year, and on the relations existing between the bishops of Central America at that period.

"Since I wrote you my last long letter, I had occasion to visit the province of Tuzulutlan. . . . . reaching its borders on the vigil of St. Peter (28th of June), I met there many messengers from the Caciques and many prominent men of that country, who told me that they were very glad of my coming. At half a league from the pueblo, the whole population, men, women and children turned out to meet me, dancing as a sign of joy at my coming. On my arrival they presented me with an address, in which many thanks were given me for the trouble I had taken in coming to them. . . . . The Spaniards here are the enemies of the friars and often used to say to them: *Why don't you go to Tuzulutlan?* This moved Bartolomé de Las Casas and the other Fathers to try and gain admission to the country. Through the intervention of third parties, they succeeded in being admitted to the presence of the Caciques of these provinces and especially to that of *Jecucistlan*, which is a pueblo adjoining Tuzulutlan. By presents and by promises

that no other Spaniard would be admitted, the people little by little lost their fears and admitted the friars. They listen cheerfully to the word of God, and seem to be satisfied as long as nothing is asked of them; what the future will develop, God only knows. To tell the truth, I am convinced that all those people will be brought to the knowledge of God. The friars deserve much credit for their good intentions and their zeal. The province is the craggiest and most mountainous in these parts, and so poor that there is no likelihood of the Spaniards ever settling there. The beginning of it is about eighty miles from here, and from thence to the sea about one hundred and thirty. Only seven or eight pueblos, worth mentioning, are to be found in all that province. I give you these particulars because I know that the bishop of Chiapa and the friars will write you miracles about it; but what I tell you is the truth. As I was about to leave, Fray Bartolomé arrived there. Let your Majesty be kind to the friars and encourage them. That country is well adapted to them, there being no Spaniards or any one else to worry them; and there they will be at liberty to go and come and to rule as they please. I will visit them occasionally and

give them what encouragement I can. When Fray Bartolomé told me that the country belonged to his diocese, I answered that he was welcome to it. I know that he will draw on his imagination and invent tales about things which neither he, or your Majesty, understand. His general make up is hypocrisy, and in fact, as soon as he was given a mitre, his vanity propped up, as if he had never been a friar, and as if the sincerity of the zeal, he had showed while attending to certain important business, should not now need be proved by greater humility and greater holiness. As my object in writing was only to inform you about Tuzulutlan, I here end my letter."

Why did Marroquin speak so disparagingly of his old friend Las Casas, to whom he had, only five or six years before, entrusted the task of going to Spain to recruit Dominican and Franciscan friars for his diocese of Guatemala. The following seems to be the explanation. When Marroquin met Las Casas in Tuzulutlan, no doubt both prelates were on their way to Gracias a Dios. In Tuzulutlan the Guatemalan bishop discovered that the main object of Las Casas' journey was not the consecration of a new bishop, but to have the

new laws enforced at once by the Audiencia. He was besides invited to join his friend and the new bishop of Nicaragua in a *requerimiento* to the Audiencia. These things were not to the liking of his lordship of Guatemala, who retraced his steps to his episcopal city.

If we look for a reason for this conduct, we shall find it in a letter written jointly by Las Casas and the bishop of Nicaragua and addressed to Prince Philip, informing him that "the bishop of Guatemala had a Repartimiento, and many slaves, and that the doctrine preached by him on the subject, was not sound." Oh Marroquin, oh Marroquin, *quantum mutatus ab illo!* The conquistadores had baited the apostle of Guatemala, and even he had taken to the bait.

It must have been the end of August or the beginning of September when Las Casas arrived in Gracias a Dios. Fray Antonio de Valdivieso, the bishop-elect of Nicaragua, was already there, but the bishop of Honduras had not yet arrived. While waiting on him in order to proceed to the ceremony of consecration, the bishop of Chiapa was not idle.

He had learned, by long experience, that no important and permanent reforms were

to be obtained through the American crown officers, unless they were constantly goaded to action by the central government at Madrid. Therefore, on the 30th of September he addressed a long letter to Prince Philip, regent of Spain during his father's absence, petitioning 1st, that the Audiencia of Gracias a Dios be instructed to assist him and his clergy to perform the pastoral office and to instruct the natives. 2d, that a salary be assigned to the secular clergy engaged in the work of the ministry in his diocese. 3d, that sufficient funds be appropriated to make the necessary repairs on his cathedral church. 4th, that he be authorized to name successors to his excommunicated dean, and to the canon, who had left for Guatemala, from among the clergy, who were already in the diocese. 5th, that the name of the province known as the land of war be changed to *Vera Paz* (true peace.) 6th, that sufficient altar wine be furnished to the Fathers working in the province of Vera Paz. All of these requests were granted in good time. Others had to be referred to his majesty the emperor.

It is interesting to know that the name *Vera Paz* designating, in all geographical maps, the northern province of the present

Republic of Guatemala, was given to it by the first American priest. It has now endured for more than three centuries and a half, and is a better monument than all the statues erected, in almost every city of Spanish America, to perpetuate the memory of the Protector of the Indians. The original royal decree calling that province Vera Paz can yet be consulted by the historian. It is dated Madrid the 15th of January 1547.

It might have been expected that Las Casas could have gotten what he wanted from the Audiencia, the establishment of which he had solicited, and obtained, practically selecting himself its judges. But, as one of his best biographers remarks, he was no reader of characters, and, in almost every instance, was disappointed by the persons selected to coöperate with him in his humanitarian works. In this instance, his old friend of Guatemala, Maldonado, had been appointed chief justice at Las Casas' request. Evidently the Audiencia had adopted a policy of procrastination in considering the demands of the bishop of Chiapa, and the prelate had made himself obnoxious in pressing them.

One day Las Casas on entering the waiting room of the court, heard an officer re-

mark: "Put out that fool." On another occasion he was in the court room in the company of Father Valdivieso, and on his giving an answer which did not suit the chief justice, the latter ordered the marshall to expel him by force, with the remark: "*Estos cocinerillos en sacandolos del convento no hay quien se puede averiguar con ellos.*" (As soon as these little pigs get out of their convents, nobody can get along with them.)

Next day Las Casas presented himself again in court, and in the presence of the officers, and several other persons, who happened to be present, solemnly summoned the judges, in the name of God, of St. Peter and St. Paul, and of the Roman Pontiff, to relieve his Church and his flock from the tyranny, to which they were then subject; to give orders to the Spaniards not to obstruct the preaching of the Gospel; and to enable him to exercise freely his jurisdiction. It caused the chief justice to lose his temper altogether.

"You are an unblushing coward," he said, "a bad man, a bad friar, and a bad bishop. You ought to be punished." The venerable prelate, in spite of his years, never was at a loss for a repartee, and answered with dignity: "I fully deserve all

that your lordship has said of me, *Señor Licenciado Alonso Maldonado.*" He meant to say, and the judge understood him: "I deserve to be punished for having recommended the like of you to the supreme judgeship."

This episode in the life of Las Casas illustrates the arrogance with which the civil magistrates often dealt with even the ecclesiastical hierarchy, although certain modern historians would have us believe that in those days the Church had usurped civil jurisdiction.

It is true, however, that Maldonado, after swallowing his anger, thought himself excommunicated, and excommunication then meant disability to hold office. An ambiguous apology was therefore offered the bishop, a few days after, and, on the strength of that, a priest was found to absolve him.

His early training, years of study, his experience at the court of Spain had made of Las Casas one of the foremost lawyers and legislators of his time. As no other method seemed to avail, he at last instituted legal proceedings before the Audiencia. On the 22d of October he presented to the court a written document which begins as follows: "May it please your lord-

ships. I, the bishop of Ciudad Real de Chiapa, Don Bartolomé de Las Casas, in order to comply with my pastoral duty, the dictates of my conscience, and the sacred canons, which I swore to obey, on the day of my consecration, hereby ask and demand of your lordships, the president and judges of this royal Audiencia, sitting in this city of Gracias a Dios, the following:

1st. That, whereas my church is oppressed and my jurisdiction impeded, so that I cannot exercise it freely, on account of the disobedience and rebellion of the ordinary judiciary of my episcopal city, your lordships give me freedom, and the means to exercise said ecclesiastical jurisdiction, ... as you are by law bound to do."

It would take too much space to give the whole document in full, and the substance only follows.

The 2d asks the assistance of the secular arm to punish ecclesiastical and secular lawbreakers.

3d. Relief for the Indians of his diocese from enforced labor, excessive tributes, etc.

4th. Ecclesiastical tribunals must be declared competent to decide litigations in matters pertaining to the Indians.

5th. The Spaniards must be forbidden and prevented from establishing Encomiendas in Yucatan, as per the new laws.

6th. The Indians, now free vassals of the crown, must be protected.

7th. Substantially that the new laws must be declared in force at once.

Four days after, that is, on the 26th of October, 1545, the Audiencia took action, and formally answered the bishop's summons or Requerimiento. Six of his requests were apparently granted, that is, promises were made to comply with them. But the last was referred to his Majesty the king.

The answer, or sentence ended as follows: "In this Audiencia answer was always made to the bishop of Chiapa and to the other bishops, and their requests have always been complied with, if not inconsistent with good government, with a view especially to insure good treatment, preservation and instruction of the natives. The liberty of the Church has in no manner been interfered with, or its jurisdiction obstructed, whereas the bishop of Chiapa has attempted to usurp that of his Majesty, the emperor, as appears from his pretensions before this Audiencia, of which, and of his want of respect to this court, his Majesty shall be informed, in order that he may be punished, etc."

One of the practical effects of the court's

decision was the appointment of one of its own judges, Juan Rogel, to go to Ciudad Real and see that the tribunal's mandates were carried out.

But Las Casas expected no substantial reform from the Audiencia, and even before the promulgation of the latter's decree, that is, on the 25th of October, he had written another long letter to Prince Philip, to which bishop-elect, Valdivieso, also affixed his signature. The two prelates informed the regent that the Church in their dioceses was oppressed, and that the condition of the Indians was becoming worse, because the new laws were not enforced. Maldonado, they said, together with his relatives, had sixty thousand Indians in his possession. He connived, and even encouraged the thefts of the royal officers, while the unscrupulous Audiencia did little or nothing to prevent their crimes. Scarcely anybody, except the bishops and the friars, who were therefore persecuted, were faithful servants of the king. Unless a remedy be found, the bishops protested, they would be compelled to abandon their dioceses. The Indians must be given their liberty, by obliging the Spaniards to observe the new laws. All bishops must be exhorted to exercise their zeal in procuring

the enforcement of the same, and in protecting the Indians. At the same time no obstacle should be thrown in their way, in the exercise of their jurisdiction, while the privileges of their respective churches must be preserved intact. The division of the present diocese of Chiapa was recommended. This should not extend further than the province of Vera Paz, while a new one should be erected in Yucatan, and another in Soconusco. Judge Herrera is represented as worthy of the office, of which he was the incumbent, while one Licenciado Diego de Pineda, heretofore prosecuting attorney in the Audiencia of Panama, is described as a just and virtuous man, and recommended for promotion. In Mexico, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Yucatan, there were rich and influential men of a turbulent character, who should be expelled from those provinces.

We know already that the new laws had caused bloodshed and rebellion in Peru, but we learn, from Las Casas' and Valdivieso's letter, that the Spaniards of Mexico and Central America were, in secret, ready to rise and follow the standard of Gonzalo Pizarro, if a serious attempt was made to enforce the new laws in all their rigor.

Charles V. and Philip II. have been

blamed for partially repealing the new laws, and for yielding to the American rebels. Had they not done so, American independence would probably have been achieved three and a half centuries sooner, but the natives would have certainly succumbed to the avarice and bloodthirstiness of the Conquistadores. Las Casas, throughout his long life, followed but one principle. *Ruat coelum*, thought he, and his school, but let justice *hic et nunc* be done to the Indians.

The court of Spain on the contrary was guided by practical statesmanship; it yielded, when it could not rule, it governed, whenever government did not imply the destruction of both the white and the red man. This explains how the Protector of the Indians enjoyed, for full fifty years, the favor of Ferdinand and of Isabella, of the great Ximenes, of Pope Adrian, of Charles V., and of Philip II., while his efforts in behalf of the aboriginal Americans apparently never were backed by sufficient energy to insure a full measure of success. The Spanish government availed itself of Las Casas' purity of life, of his influence, of his learning, and of his prodigious energy in consolidating its western empire, and in checking the greed and the cruelty of the

Conquistadores, and thus prevent, at least, the extinction of the inferior race. But it could not always follow in practice the impetuous Clerigo, the choleric friar, and the thundering bishop.

The Audiencia also wrote to the regent, giving in their own way their side of the question, and representing Las Casas in so unfairly a light, that Judge Herrera declined to sign the letter. He wrote individually to the emperor giving his reasons for so doing, as follows. "I did not sign the letter which this Audiencia wrote you, because it appeared to me too violent against the bishops of Chiapa and Nicaragua, and against one of the Fathers, Fray Vicente. The bishop of Chiapa appears to me very bold. Their offense consisted of certain writings, which have been sent to you by the Audiencia. I think that their intentions were good, although their zeal was intemperate. I know that the natives are very much ill-treated. Your Majesty call them free; would to God, that they were treated as slaves are; for then they would not be used as carriers, they would be nursed in sickness, and fed when hungry." Herrera's letter is dated the 24th of December, 1545.

Chief justice Maldonado also thought

proper to write a private letter, in which he says: "Your Majesty will see from the letter of the Audiencia, how the bishop of Chiapa has been acting. Ever since he came back from Spain a bishop, he has been so arrogant (*tiene tanta soberbia*) that nobody can get along with him. We think here, that a convent in Castile would suit him better than a mitre here. It would be well to make him explain to the council of the Indies, how the Indians are subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Because we declined to place them under that jurisdiction, as he had requested us to do, he excommunicated the Audiencia. It is advisable that your Majesty erect Yucatan into a diocese. If Father Toribio Motolinia of the Order of St. Francis, one of the first, who came to Mexico, would accept that mitre, he would be well worthy of it, as he is in every way a very virtuous and eloquent man. I think that he would fill the office well." *)

*) Toribio Motolinia acquired a very unenviable reputation ever since the beginning of the present century, when students began to be interested in early American history. His real name was Toribio de Benavente. But the Mexicans used the word "Motolinia" (poor) to distinguish the Franciscans from the other Spaniards, who, they thought, were rich. Motolinia had come to Mexico shortly after the conquest by Cortez, and because Motolinia

The bishop of Honduras had at last arrived in Gracias a Dios, and the consecration of bishop-elect Valdivieso took

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was the first word he had learned of the Aztec language, he called himself Father Toribio *Motolinia*, i. e. Toribio the poor. Though zealous almost to fanaticism in the conversion of the Indians, he always took good care to remain on the side of the Conquistadores,and, when in 1553, printed copies of Las Casas' pamphlet "*Brevisima Relacion de La Destruccion De Las Indias*" began to find their way among the Spaniards of New Spain, he wrote a memorial to Charles V., in which he painted the bishop of Chiapa in scarcely brighter colors than those, with which he was want to describe the devil to his Indian converts. The memorial can be seen in an appendix to Quintana's biography of Las Casas. This author sizes Toribio Motolinia as follows: "This friar went to Mexico with the other missionaries of his Order at the request of Cortez, and reached New Spain shortly after the fall of the Aztec capital. He was easily distinguishable among his brothers by his threadbare habit, his almost continuous preaching, by his austerities, as well as by his talents. He acquired quite a store of information concerning the prehistoric times of Mexico, and wrote several pamphlets on the subject, which are quoted by Herrera and other historians. The most pronounced trait of his character however, was his charity to the Indians. All that he possessed was theirs, and if any of them appealed to him in hunger, he divided with him the alms which were intended for himself. This is the picture which Bernal Diaz makes of him, and it is strange that between the two opinions which divided the theologians and jurists of his times, he should have embraced the one least favorable to the Indians.

The reader understands now, why judge Maldonado thought friar Toribio Motolinia so well fitted to wear an American mitre.

place. By that time letters had arrived from Ciudad Real, in which Las Casas was informed by his vicar general, Canon Perera, that a committee, empowered by the citizens to act in their name, had presented themselves at the episcopal residence to *requerir* or summon the bishop, or, in his absence, his vicar general to withdraw the reservation of the *casus conscientiae* touching on Indian slavery and restitution. Their pretensions were again founded on the bull of Pope Alexander VI. They asked for an answer in writing. The prudent vicar general promised to give it within thirty days, and declared to them that he was ready to absolve them all, if they consented to set their slaves free and to make restitution of their illgotten wealth. The citizens allowed the thirty days to lapse without calling for the promised answer, because they thought they had struck on a better plan to obtain their object. This consisted of an offer to Perera, to put him in possession of the church, as its parish priest, with a fat salary and other inducements, if he would accept it, and relinquish at the same time the office of vicar general. Happily Perera proved loyal to his bishop and spurned the bribe.

The gravity of the situation in the episcopal city decided the sending of commissioner Rogel to Ciudad Real, and at once Las Casas left Gracias a Dios in time to reach home for the celebration of the Christmas festivities. But a letter had preceded him to Ciudad Real from some interested party, saying: "The bishop has left for Chiapa to encompass the ruin of your poor city. With him goes one of the judges to re-assess the tributes to be paid by the Indians. It is a mystery to us here, how you do not put an end to so many evils." The letter was addressed to the town council. The city fathers thereupon rang the tocsin, and called the citizens to a mass-meeting, and in the presence of the assembled multitude the secretary was directed to read a declaration to the effect that the bishop had taken possession of his see without notifying in person, as he was by law bound to do, the Cabildo, and without exhibiting the papal bulls and the royal decrees; and that he had notwithstanding reserved to himself the absolution of cases, on the subject of which an appeal was pending before the emperor. It was therefore resolved, that, whereas the threatened reduction of tributes would impoverish the citizens,

and cause an uprising among the Indians, the bishop be notified to attempt no innovation, and to proceed like the other bishop of New Spain, i. e. wait until the procurators appointed to lay the matter before the emperor, whose decision they were ready to obey, should return from Spain. It was also resolved that, should any disorder arise from the bishop's noncompliance with the foregoing demands, he alone, not they, be held responsible. A third resolution was also carried to the effect, that, unless the bishop acceded to their demands, he would be deprived of his temporalities. And there and then the Cabildo passed an ordinance forbidding citizens from paying tithes under penalty of a fine of one hundred castellanos.

One of the Dominicans residing in Cinacatlan heard of the doings of the mass meeting, and fearing that the raving populace might take possession of the bishop's library and manuscripts, or destroy them, sent a lay brother and a layman to place them beyond their reach. The two gentlemen went by night, and, although discovered, succeeded, after a scrimmage with a couple of watchmen, to fulfil their Mission. By this time Las Casas had reached Copanabastla, a few leagues farther from

Ciudad Real than Cinacatlan. While resting for a day, he thought it advisable to send ahead a reliable gentleman of his suite to quietly investigate the state of the popular mind. The messenger, or detective, had not been an hour in town, in the house of a confidential friend, when his presence was discovered, and he owed it to the swiftness of his lower limbs, that he succeeded in getting away by a circuitous route, that landed him in the convent of Cinacatlan. Here the friars wrote Las Casas a letter, enclosing a copy of the resolutions passed by the angry people of his episcopal city.

These, having been informed by the sudden appearance and subsequent flight of the bishop's messenger, that his lordship was approaching, resolved anew not to allow him to again take possession of his cathedral, without a pledge, that the reservation of the *casus conscientiae* would be withdrawn. Indian sentinels were placed on all the roads leading into town to watch him and to give the alarm as soon as he should appear.

Las Casas on his side, while resting at Copanabastla, had instructed his Indian carriers to precede him with his baggage to the city. But on receipt of the letter from the friars of Cinacatlan, the carriers were

recalled, not however before they had reached the sentinels guarding the approaches to the town. When it was learned in Ciudad Real that the bishop had recalled his Indian carriers, the citizens concluded that he must have abandoned the idea of forcing matters, and that he would either keep out of town, or give the desired pledges, and on the strength of that conviction the mob gave vent to their feelings by wild rejoicings, as if an attack from an enemy had been repelled.

Meanwhile Las Casas was in consultation with the Dominicans of Copanabastla, as to what should best be done in the premises. Opinions varied; but he reasoned thus: "If I go not to Ciudad Real, I'll become an exile from my Church, and, inasmuch as it would be myself who would remain away from it of my own free will, it could be said with sufficient reason: 'the bad man fleeth while nobody pursueth him.' And after all, how do we know that they want to kill me, and that the sentinels are there for that purpose? That the good Fathers of Cinacatlan wrote me the truth, I have no doubt, but there are also the words of our Lord himself, which he spoke to his disciples, when they advised him not to return to Judea, where the people had at-

tempted to kill him the day before; 'there are twelve hours in a day, and in every hour, in every moment, and in every instant men may change their minds.' Surely the people of Ciudad Real are not demons to be so confirmed in sin. Is it possible that the mercy of God will permit them to commit so horrible a crime as to murder me? If I go not to my church, what reasons shall I have for complaining to the pope and to the emperor? Am I sure that I shall not be able to ward off their anger, and that my first word shall be stifled by a dagger's thrust through my heart? Yes, my good Fathers, trusting in the mercy of God and your fervent prayers, I have resolved to proceed on my journey, as no other alternative is left me without compromising my duty."

Amidst the tears of the friars the fearless prelate set out at sunset, and late at night surprised the sentinels, who had fallen asleep. "Are you ready," he said to them in their native tongue, "to betray your Father?" And the Indians fell on their knees to beg his pardon.

Las Casas feared to compromise those innocent tools of the tyranny of the Spaniards, who would have wreaked on them their vengeance, had the sentinels allowed

him to enter the city unheralded. To save them from punishment, Father Vicente Ferrer, one of his travelling companions, and a stalwart negro *) servant were ordered to hold fast the two diminutive Guatemalans, while he himself tied their hands on their backs. With his willing prisoners walking in front of him, Las Casas made straight for the cathedral, and on reaching it early in the morning, aroused the sacristan and notified the Cabildo of his presence, asking them to come to the church, where he was waiting for them.

Had a beleaguered city fallen suddenly into the hands of the enemy, it could have created no greater commotion, than the unexpected appearance of Las Casas did that early morning in Ciudad Real. The aldermen met to deliberate on what should be done next, and concluded to answer the bishop's call. Entering the church, they took seats, as if expecting to hear a sermon, and, when the venerable prelate issued forth from the sacristy, not one of them rose from his seat, or exhibited the least

*) The negro was of gigantic stature, and in jest, Las Casas had dubbed him *Juanito* (little John). He traversed the continent with the bishop three times. Whenever they came to a swollen stream, Juanito's duty was to cross the prelate on his shoulders.

sign of respect by word or action. On the contrary the secretary, regardless of the sacredness of the place, proceeded at once to read aloud the resolutions adopted at the mass meeting, suppressing however all threats of an appeal to the archbishop, the pope, or the king, and all allusions to the non-payment of temporalities.

Las Casas answered them as a father would his children. Meekly he protested his readiness to make any sacrifice, even to the shedding of his blood, in their behalf, assuring them that absolutely nothing would be done injurious to their temporal welfare, unless it was found necessary to prevent sins against God, or their neighbors. They should not be guided by sudden impulses, originating in anger, but view things calmly in the light of reason and faith. The Protector of the Indians possessed the eloquence of persuasion, and could reach the hearts of an audience as well as he was wont to convince the intellects. The address seemed to produce the desired effect, when an impertinent fellow, without rising from his seat, or uncovering his head, said: "You ought to be proud of having among your flock as distinguished gentlemen as these, who are now listening to you. Your not treating us with the consideration due

to our rank has been keenly felt. Why did you not call on us, if you had any business with us?"

The bishop, assuming an attitude of gravity in keeping with the dignity of his office, answered calmly: "Sir, and all of you here present, know ye, that, if I shall have to transact any temporal affairs with you, I will call at your houses; but, if I shall have to speak to you about matters concerning the service of God, or your souls, I will send for you, and you shall have to come to me, if you are Christians."

The white haired prelate had risen and was walking into the sacristy, when the secretary respectfully approached him and handed him a petition of the people, which, he said, needed not to be read, as the substance of it all was only that the citizens be treated as Christians, and that confessors be appointed to absolve them. "Very well," answered the bishop; "I hereby appoint Canon Perera and all the Dominican fathers in this diocese that shall be recommended by their prior."

"We do not want them," answered more than one man, "because they share your opinions; give us some who will not strip us of everything we have."

"Very well, I appoint the Guatemala

priest, who resides in this diocese, and one of the Fathers of Mercy."

On hearing which, Father Vicente Ferrer, who stood by his side, pulled the bishop's cassock, and said loud enough to be heard: "Do no such thing, bishop, even if they should kill you." But Las Casas knew that the two ecclesiastics he had in mind were both learned and zealous, and that they thought as he did on the subject of Indian slavery. Father Ferrer would have received rounds of abuses, if nothing worse, for his trouble, had not the Fathers of Mercy entered the church, who, on hearing of the bishop's arrival, had come to invite him to their convent.

Las Casas, who was then seventy-one years old, had walked not less than twenty miles the night before, and the excitement of the morning had so worked on his nerves that on arriving at the convent, he feared a collapse. Retiring at once to one of the cells, he called for a glass of wine and some bread, with the intention of going to sleep. The lay brother had not yet come with the refreshments, when a deafening noise was heard in the convent yard below. Another riot seemed to be imminent. In fact in a few minutes the house was filled with armed men, and the bishop's heart failed

him for a moment, at the sight of swords, stilettos, and daggers, in the hands of the ruffians, who surrounded him. In the turmoil the cause of the tumult could not readily be ascertained by the friars. But, by the time that Las Casas had learned that the people's anger had been aroused by the tying up of their sentinels, he had regained full self possession, and composedly addressed the crowd: "Gentlemen, blame no one else but myself, for I it was, who surprised them and tied them up with my own hands, knowing, as I did, that otherwise they would be punished for not giving warning of my coming on account of the love they bear me, whom they consider their benefactor."

"So goes the world," yelled one of the crowd, "the savior of the Indians ties up the Indians, and then writes memorials to Spain against us, as if it was we, who ill-treat them, while he manacles them and forces them to walk in front of him three leagues at night."

Another scoundrel addressed to the bishop so villainous an insult, that historians, says Quintana, refused to put it on record. Las Casas' answer to it was: "I prefer not to answer you, sir, and leave the punishment to God, whom you have outraged rather than myself."

While these scenes were being enacted in the bishop's room, an individual chanced to see his colored servant in the convent yard, and picked up a quarrel with him, endeavoring to elicit an acknowledgement that he it was, who had tied the Indian sentinels the night before. The colored man, while protesting that his lordship himself had done the work, was stretched on the ground by one fell blow of a stick in the hands of his assailer. A number of young friars, who were firm believers in muscular monasticism, rushed to the assistance of the Negro, and cleared the yard of armed men. The rioters in the interior of the building unexpectedly meeting with resistance, and realizing that they should have either to shed blood within the sacred precincts, and thereby incur excommunication, or withdraw, retired, and left the bishop in peace.

The disgraceful doings just described all took place before nine o'clock in the morning; but by noon of the same day, a complete revulsion of popular sentiments had already apparently taken place. The leaders had come to ask forgivenes on their knees to Las Casas, and the Cabildo and city officers had presented themselves without their side-arms and insignia of

office, in sign of submission and repentance. A procession was formed and the bishop was escorted, in a manner befitting his episcopal dignity, to one of the best houses in town, which had been hurriedly fitted up for his reception.

Some writers have gone to considerable trouble to explain this sudden change of front by the Spaniards of Ciudad Real. The explanation is not far to seek. There were in town quite a number of late emigrants from Spain, conservative men, who owned no slaves, and who had taken no part in the riotous proceedings. They naturally sided with the bishop. After the frensied excitement of the morning, as generally happens in like cases, reason reasserted itself, and the haughty and heartless Conquistadores realized that they might yet have to pay for their outrages with the confiscation of their estates and possibly with exile or life imprisonment in a Spanish dungeon. Steps were therefore taken to disarm the bishop's anger, and public games and popular demonstrations in his honor were decreed to take place on the day after Christmas. The holy days were spent in the best of harmony, and judging from outward manifestations of respect and veneration, one might have thought Las

Casas the best beloved pastor of his flock in all christendom. But the slave-owners had not surrendered to their enemy; only their tactics had been changed.

If they could but nullify the work of the Dominicans, the friars would perhaps realize, in the course of time, that their zeal was exercised in vain, and leave the country. The bishop, thus deprived of their assistance and of their influence, would probably follow in their footsteps. Accordingly before many days had passed of the year 1546, it was decided to undertake a raid on the mission of Cinacatlan. The maurauders marched into the pueblo in serried ranks, where the leaders rushed into the convent, and, while they quarrelled with the Fathers and clamored to be absolved, the rank and file sacked the village. Then they marched back into Ciudad Real, as if in triumph.

Why had not a special officer been sent to Central America to promulgate the new laws and to try to have them accepted as had been done in Mexico, Hispaniola and Peru? It had been done, and Pedro de Quiñones was the incumbent. But he was in Nicaragua, endeavoring to expel captain Melchor Verdugo, who had been commissioned by the viceroy of Peru to go to

that country and recruit loyal volunteers, who were to be shipped south to oppose the open rebellion of Gonzalo Pizarro. Verdugo had gathered considerable reënforcements of men and provisions, but instead of taking them to Peru, had started a little revolution of his own in Nicaragua, and had become the terror of that country. It must not be forgotten that the whole of Spanish America was in a state of semi anarchy and that the supremacy of Spanish power hung by a thread. The new laws were the cause of it all, and the officers of the crown had adopted everywhere (except in Peru) an attitude of yielding indulgence, and of forbearance, fearing that the sudden and strict enforcement of the new legislation, instead of mending, would make matters worse. These considerations had guided the Audiencia of Gracias a Dios in sending commissioner Rogel to Ciudad Real to replace Quiñones and to throw oil on the troubled waters, while partially complying with the peremptory requests of the Protector of the Indians.

Charles V., on the 20th of November, 1545, had mitigated and partially repealed the new laws, but when Rogel reached Ciudad Real at the beginning of 1546 the news had not yet arrived in that city.

Las Casas was getting ready for another long journey to Mexico city, the object of which was to attend a convention of all the bishops and of the most prominent ecclesiastics of New Spain, called together by a special royal commissioner *ad hoc*, named Francisco Tello de Sandoval. The matters to be discussed by the prelates were the relations existing, or that should exist between the Spaniards and the Indians.

As might have been expected of him, Las Casas began pleading in behalf of his afflicted flock with commissioner Rogel, as soon as the judge arrived in town, and quoted frequently the new laws. One day Rogel, who seems to have been of a well balanced turn of mind, answered Las Casas as follows: "Your lordship knows very well that those new laws were enacted in Valladolid by the combined wisdom of learned and experienced men; but one of the reasons why they are so detested in the Indies is because your lordship had a hand in soliciting and in framing the same. The Conquistadores are so prejudiced against you, that whatever you do, appears to them as done, not so much for the love you bear the Indians, as through the hatred you bear the Spaniards. Your lordship has been called by Don Francisco Tello to the con-

vention of prelates, which he is convoking in Mexico city. I would be much pleased, if your lordship should hasten your departure, because as long as you will be here, I'll be able to do nothing. I would not like them to think, that it is to please you, that I do what I am otherwise in duty bound to do, because it would then all be labor lost."

Las Casas felt the force of the unpalatable arguments and hastened his preparations to leave Ciudad Real for Mexico city. The journey was begun during the first week of lent, but the travelling was done by easy stages, as it was yet several months before the time appointed for the meeting of the council. The Spaniards, who had been at peace with their bishop for three months, made some demonstration of sorrow at his departure, and a goodly number of men accompanied him on foot as far as Cinacatlan. Here the bishop spent several weeks with the Dominicans, conferring with them and discussing the matters or schemata to be treated by the council; for he expected that the doctrines heretofore preached and upheld so tenaciously by himself and his fellow-friars would be much controverted in the City of Mexico. He meant to be well prepared to defend them single handed,

if necessary, inasmuch as, since his return from Gracias a Dios, he had received letters from the royal commissioner Francisco Tello de Sandoval, almost reprimanding him for having denied the Sacraments to the Conquistadores, thereby condemning the conduct of the other American bishops, who had adopted more conciliatory methods.

Las Casas' travelling companions on this occasion were Father Ladrada, Vicente Ferrer, Luis Cancer, Dominicans, and canon Perera. The latter, at some time or other, had held opinions on the subject of Indian slavery contrary to those of the bishop. But, after assisting at the Cinacatlan conferences, became so convinced that the friars were in the right, that he returned to Ciudad Real for the sole purpose of correcting his past error in the presence of the cathedral congregation. He read from the pulpit a statement on the subject after which a sermon followed so convincing and persuasive, that several slave owners in the audience repented of their past sins.

Bravo! canon Perera; your name, linked to that of the immortal Protector of the Indians, will go down to posterity as that of an honest man and of a good priest. You first obeyed your bishop, contrary to

your own convictions, and, when these vanished before valid argument, you confessed your error.

The bishop and his companions made another stop in the town of Antequera, in the Diocese of Oaxaca, where they lodged in the Dominican convent of the place. Here Las Casas heard that his *quondam* dean Quintana was in the neighborhood, and took some steps to have him arrested, but did not succeed. The dean (I say it here to be done with him) proceeded to Mexico, where, through the intercession of influential friends, he succeeded to have himself readmitted to the exercise of his ministry. But, unrepentant, and fixed in his ideas, he made his way back to Ciudad Real, and, having obtained from the Conquistadores power of attorney to act for them in Spain, went to court as their agent against Las Casas. He never relented in his efforts to down his former bishop until he saw him resign the mitre. The unfortunate dean was drowned during his return voyage to America.

Las Casas' journey was nearing its end, and the news of his impending entrance into the City of Mexico affected the citizens, as if an army was threatening the American metropolis. His name was on everybody's

tongue and it was feared that some disorder might be caused by his sudden appearance. Sandoval therefore sent him word not to enter the city, until further advised. When however the bishop of Chiapa arrived at ten o'clock the following morning, the crowds, who had gathered to see the renowned Protector of the Indians, uttered not a disrespectful word. On the contrary some passersby (who must have owned no slaves) were heard to remark: "there goes the holy bishop, the true Father of the Indians." Thousands of others must in their hearts have admired and applauded the friend of the friendless, as he wended his way to the Dominican convent.

That same afternoon the viceroy and the judges of the Audiencia called to pay their respects to the bishop of Chiapa. Promptly Las Casas gave another sign of his excessively unbending character. It should have been expected that, for the sake of his Indians, if for nothing else, the Protector of the Indians would have treated the gentlemen, who had in their hands the government of New Spain, with the deference and consideration due to their exalted positions and to their rank. But, no sooner had they left his apartments, when Las Casas sent them word, not to ex-

pect him to return their visit, as they had incurred excommunication by ordering, some time before, the amputation of a clergyman's hand (for what crime it is not said) in the city of Antequera. Of course the news of the bishop's sally spread through the city, and, as the judges could produce plausible reasons for their official action, not they, but the bishop was made the butt of much witty criticism.

It is astonishing, that, notwithstanding his bluntness and his apparent inclination to court opposition by flinging, in season and out of season, unpalatable truths in the face of officialdom, Las Casas, not only commanded the respect of all that were sincere and honorable, but, by the force of his eloquence, the purity of his life, and by his disinterestedness, generally succeeded in the end to bring them over to his way of thinking. In the council, over which the archbishop of Mexico presided, Las Casas soon became the leading spirit. The other members, having a voice in its deliberations, were the bishops of Guatemala, Oaxaca, Michoacan and Tlascala; the superiors or provincials of the religious orders, and the most prominent theologians and jurists to be found in New Spain.

No other convention of men (that which

declared the independence of these United States not excepted), assembled on this western continent in the interests of liberty, ever had as weighty problems to solve. The bishop of Chiapa took care from the beginning that the council should not resolve itself into a debating society, for the display of the oratorical talents of its members, and insisted, that certain indisputable principles should first be agreed upon, as a basis of all discussions; and he carried his point. I will translate five of these principles which embody the others.

1st. All persons, no matter what sect or religion they may profess, and no matter what sins they may have been guilty of, rightfully own and possess what they acquired without prejudice to others. The principle applies to their kingdoms, principalities, seignories, dignities and jurisdictions.

2nd. Only one method was appointed by divine providence to teach the true religion to pagans, i. e. that which through the reasoning faculties convinces the intellect, and attracts the will by the gentle ways of charity. This applies to all mankind irrespective of errors and corruption of morals.

3rd. The Holy See, in granting the

supreme dominion over the Indies had only one object in view, and that was the preaching of the gospel, the spread of the Christian religion, and the conversion of the aborigines. It did not intend to make the Castilian monarchs greater or richer princes than they were before.

4th. In making said grant the Holy See did not intend to deprive the native rulers of their estates, jurisdictions or dignities. Much less did it mean to confer upon the kings of Spain the power to do aught that might retard or obstruct in any manner the conversion of the natives.

5th. The kings of Spain, inasmuch as they offered and bound themselves to provide the means for preaching the gospel in the Indies, are obliged by the law of God to pay the necessary expenses of the evangelical laborers."

It is not difficult to read the unmistakable handwriting of the Protector of the Indians in the foregoing propositions. Are not these his very doctrines advocated for thirty years in the presence of kings and emperors, and against all comers? Had he not preached them from the pulpit and from the rostrum, and especially and ex professo in his treaty *De Unico Vocationis Modo?*

The principles are to us almost self-evident; but it is nevertheless remarkable that they were subscribed by every member of that civil ecclesiastical council, if we consider that the conclusions drawn from them could not but vindicate the past conduct of Las Casas, and read a stinging rebuke to the Conquistadores and to the ecclesiastics who had opposed him.

Las Casas had let no opportunity pass, during the sittings of the convention, which lasted several weeks, to press a resolution containing an explicit declaration that the slavery of the Indians was tyrannical and unjust; but the presiding officer had always succeeded in sidetracking it under various pretexts. As the champion of liberty was persistent in clamoring that it be taken up and passed, he was at last told privately by the viceroy, that, if the question had been ignored, it was because he himself had instructed the learned body not to touch upon it at present, *for reasons of state.*

Las Casas made no reply. But the following Sunday, it being his turn to preach in the presence of the council, and of the viceroyal court, he took occasion to speak of the *state reasons*, and selected for his text the 8th, 9th and the 10th verses of Isaias:

"Now then, go in and write for them upon box, and note it diligently in a book, and it shall be in the latter days for a testimony for ever. For it is a people that provoketh to wrath, and lying children, children that will not hear the law of God. *Who say to the seers: "See not; and to them that behold: Behold not those things for us, that are right; speak to us pleasant things.*" The sermon made a deep impression on viceroy Mendoza (undoubtedly a well meaning man and a great benefactor of Mexico) who expressed himself as sorry for not having allowed the subject of Indian slavery to be taken up during the sittings of the council. Las Casas suggested that the mischief could be partially undone by an unofficial junta of all the members of the convention (except the bishops) called together to discuss and decide the question. Mendoza accepted the suggestion and promised to officially submit the findings of the junta to the consideration of the emperor. The sittings of this unofficial body were many, at which the Protector of the Indians was ably represented, as his mouthpiece, by Father Luis Cancer. At one of the sittings the question arose, if it was lawful to hold as slaves the Indian prisoners of war. It was presented, not in the ab-

stract, but as a concrete proposition: "could the so-called prisoners of war captured by the Conquistadores be considered as slaves?"

It was held by some of the members that they could, whenever the Indians, having previously been notified that the pope had granted the supreme dominion to Spain over the Indies, refused to submit, and thereby brought about the conflict. *)

*) A word of explanation is here necessary for those of my readers who may not be familiar with the history of the Spanish conquest of America. It was necessary to give color and an appearance of justice to said conquest; and from the times of Ferdinand and Isabella the Conquistadores, had been officially instructed to always give the Indians sufficient instruction about the Christian religion before asking them to submit to Spanish supremacy. If they refused, after the Requerimiento or summons to acknowledge their allegiance to the king of Spain, war could then be made against them to subdue them. A formula of Requerimiento had been drawn up and placed in the hands of every adventurer or Conquistador, who proposed to make any addition to the American Spanish possessions. This official Requerimiento had been turned into a ridiculous farce by the Conquistadores who desired nothing better than to make prisoners of war to sell them into slavery. Las Casas gives the formula, commenting bitterly upon it, in the LVII. Chp. of the third book of his Historia de Las Indias. But even that farcical performance was frequently omitted or curtailed.

A few Spanish soldiers would suddenly appear in a pueblo, and having called the natives by a few blasts of the bugle, something like the following would be read to them in Spanish, not a word

Thereupon Luis Cancer drew out of his pocket a copy of the Requerimiento, read it, denounced it as a cruel parody on justice, and proved that such as it was, it seldom was served according to the intention and direction of the king.

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of which was understood by the Indians: "Listen you Indians of this pueblo. There is only one true God, and one true religion. The vicar of God on earth is called the pope, who is the sovereign lord of all the universe. He gave this country to the kings of Spain, who sent us here to invite you to become Christians. If you do so, and acknowledge the supremacy of Spain, we will treat you kindly and leave you free in the enjoyment of all your possessions. If not, we will wage war against you with fire and sword, and make you slaves." Sometime it happened that not an Indian was in sight when the Requerimiento was made.

The witty official chronicler of Charles V. (Oviedo), having once been called upon to read the Requerimiento to some warlike South Americans, who had just given a sound thrashing to Pedrarias and his ferocious soldiers, remarked: "It seems to me that these Indians do not care to listen to the theology of this Requerimiento. Please keep it until we shall have some of them in a cage, where they will have leisure to memorize it, while the bishop (Quevedo) will take pleasure in explaining it to them."

On another occasion the Requerimiento had been made seriously to a South American cacique, and an intelligent explanation of it had been given him. The chief, after a brief reflection, made answer as follows: "Your pope and the king of Castile must be two fools, one for giving away what did not belong to him, and the other for accepting it."

One of the conclusions reached by the junta was, that all Indian slaves, with the exception of a few renegade rebels, had been enslaved unjustly. Another declared that all personal service imposed on the Indians, who were not slaves, was unlawful and unjust.

The labors of both the council and the junta bore, in the course of years, abundant fruit. One man, no matter how powerful, could not at one blow tear down the hideous edifice of slavery, but, at each blow of Las Casas, one of the foundation stones was removed, and the condition of the Indians improved. The council wrote a memorial to the emperor embodying the conclusions agreed upon, thus informing him that the bishops, theologians and jurists of America, agreed, in principle at least, with those of Spain, in declaring that the Indians should be free.

Another practical point was gained of great importance to the natives. It consisted in a set of instructions sent out by the bishops, to all the secular and regular priests throughout New Spain, instructing them how to deal with penitent slave owners and with those who had acquired wealth by the enforced labor of the Indians. These were thus placed under the

protection of the confessional, a more powerful shield, than the well meaning kings of Spain had been able to afford them with the smoothly rounded periods of the innumerable decrees, which had been enacted in their behalf. So clear and unequivocal were the instructions, that it was well nigh impossible to evade them. The Spaniards of New Spain found them so radical and subversive of their preconceived ideas concerning their worldly interests, that the first copies intended for circulation were seized, and sent to Charles V. with a protest against their being put in practice. *)

*) The first printing press on this continent was imported from Spain by viceroy Mendoza to Mexico city, and among the first matters printed were the instructions to confessors adopted by the council in behalf of American liberty.

Chapter XXI.

Las Casas goes to Spain and crosses the Atlantic for the Last Time.

IT seems that Las Casas was already revolving in his mind, the resignation of his See at the time, when he had bidden farewell, amidst the tears of the community, to his fellow Dominicans of Cinacatlan, on his leaving for Mexico to attend the council. In fact he had turned over to them his few belongings as a loan, which, it was understood, would become a gift, should he sail for Spain.

The news of the partial abrogation and suspension of the new laws had reached him in Mexico city, and it was a blow the like of which he had not received since the catastrophe of Cumana. Hereafter the Spaniards of Ciudad Real would consider him a conquered foe, and a harmless fanatic, and his usefulness there was at an end. He must also have considered that his eight or ten years residence in Spain had accomplished more good for his Indians, than the twenty or twenty-five spent in America.

During each visit to the mother country a victory had been scored, while in America, with the exception of turning the land of war into Vera Paz, he had only met with apparent reverses. His place and his sphere of action was evidently near the seat of government, whence he could watch over the interests of all the Indies, instead of the little turbulent town of southern Mexico.

These considerations convinced the Protector of the Indians of the advisability of his relinquishing the government of the diocese of Chiapa into the hands of someone else, who would not be hampered by antecedents in doing what good was possible to its one million of Indians. On the 9th of November, 1546, Las Casas appointed canon Perera administrator and vicar general of his diocese, and on the following day conferred faculties to hear confession on four additional priests of the Dominican Order, and sent to Chiapa the instructions to confessors adopted by the council, by which they were to be guided in the administration of the sacrament.

What detained him in Mexico city is not known, but certain it is that the Protector of the Indians did not proceed to Vera Cruz to sail for the last time across the Atlantic

before the year 1547. In May of that year I find him in Valladolid where the ordinary headquarters of the council of the Indies were at that time. Las Casas gave the councillors a detailed account of the deplorable occurrences of the past two years in his diocese of Chiapa, and pleaded with as much zeal, eloquence and persistency as ever in behalf of the Indians. But the prince-regent Philip was then in Aragon, a couple of hundred miles from Valladolid and nothing of importance could be accomplished there without his presence. The bishop therefore took the road again, and went to Munzon, where Philip had convened the Cortes, or States General of that kingdom. The reception given to the venerable American prelate by the young prince was cordial and even affectionate. Las Casas had brought along quite a bundle of petitions all in favor of the Indians, and all of them were granted as usual. Thus I find a letter of Philip dated Munzon the 22d of July, 1547, and addressed to the Cacique of Chiapa, Don Pedro Todi, where the Dominicans had built their first convent in that diocese. It thanks with beautiful simplicity the Indian chief for his zeal, and the help given the Fathers to bring about the conversion of his tribe. Another

letter was addressed by Philip to the Dominican Fathers on June the 22d, approving the way of proceeding in Chiapa, praising their zeal, and encouraging them to still further efforts in behalf of the natives, and promising to send additional Fathers to help them in the evangelization of the entire diocese.

Las Casas did not forget his dear children of Tuzulutlan, now called Vera Paz; for a letter from Philip was addressed October the 11th to all the Caciques of that province, praising them and their people for having embraced the Christian religion and destroyed their temples and their idols. The services of the chiefs, the prince assured them, would not be forgotten. The document ends by exhorting them to gather their people into pueblos according to the wishes of the good Fathers, who were instructing them.

The year 1547 began, for the Protector of the Indians, in Mexico. The first months were spent on the sea and travelling from Seville to Valladolid, and thence to Munzon, and the last in the latter city. It is seldom possible to locate his whereabouts during the last eighteen years of his life. His headquarters were, however, in the Dominican convent at Valladolid, where he

wrote most of his voluminous works. How much of his time was spent there it is impossible to say, as he seems to have been constantly on the go to wherever the interests of his Indians required his presence. Frequently of his own initiative and many times called in consultation by the government, he was, to the very last days of his life, busy with American affairs. Numerous letters addressed to him from all parts of the Indies speak of him as a member of his Majesty's Indian council, and there is extant an order of Philip II. directing the officers of the court to always lodge comfortably and entertain the bishop of Chiapa free of charge, no matter were the court might be.*) And Geronimo de Mendieta, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Indiana*, tells us that Las Casas "resigned his bishopric

*) "To Luis de Vanegas, our chief majordomo and to the stewards that are now, or will be, whose duty it is to prepare and furnish apartments for our court in this city of Toledo or in any other city or place in this our kingdom of Castile it is ordered: that in consideration of the services which Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas has rendered to our august deceased father the emperor, and is yet rendering to us, he be given lodgings free during all the time which he may spend at court. We order that he be always given good apartments, where he may remain undisturbed, as a person of his rank has a right to be. Given at Toledo the 14th of December, 1560. I, the king."

in order to become their (the Indians') procurator general in the court of their Majesties, in which office he continued for twenty-two years."

Las Casas did not actually resign his See before the year 1550, when was assigned to him, out of the royal treasury, a pension, as his biographers would have it, but which I prefer to call a salary. For, to all intent and purpose, the first American priest, who had been a lawyer, then a secular priest, then a friar, then a bishop, had last of all become a minister of state.

Father Luis Cancer accompanied him to Spain evidently for the purpose of going to Florida with other Dominicans to establish missions. The armed expeditions to the northern coast of the gulf of Mexico had all ended in disaster, and there was no desire on the part of the Spaniards in America to engage in any new venture having in view the conquest of the vast and dreaded regions then vaguely designated with the name of Florida, and now forming the eastern half of the United States.*) Hernando de Soto's disastrous expedition, with as powerful an army as had yet fol-

*) Las Casas wrote, about this time, that by Florida was meant all the country from the Bahama channel to Labrador, "which," says he, "is not far from the island called England."

lowed any Conquistador, was yet fresh in the memory of everybody in New Spain, where the few survivors had arrived some time before, after years of wandering through the states of Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana and the present republic of Mexico. Their tales of sufferings and privations had engendered a wholesome fear of the tribes of Seminoles, Alibamons, Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws and Natchez of those northern regions. Here was a second *land of war* to be turned into another Vera Paz, and the apostles of Tuzulutlan decided to conquer it by peaceful ways to the kingdom of Christ.

One of the first cares of Las Casas on his arrival in Spain was to enter into negotiations with prince Philip for the purpose of organizing a missionary expedition to Florida, headed by saintly, learned, and fearless Father Luis Cancer. These particulars forming an interesting page of the ecclesiastical history of the United States are gathered from two letters written by the martyr priest himself in Seville and addressed to Las Casas. One of them is dated the 6th and the other the 24th of February, and though the year is not given, it is clear that they were written in 1548. At the

solicitation of Las Casas *carte blanche* had been given to Luis Cancer to charter a caravel and to provide it with all necessary equipments and provisions as early as November 1547. The full name of this first martyr of our country was Luis Cancer de Barbastro, and his native city was Zaragoza in Spain. It took him several months before he could get his caravel ready to leave San Lucar de Barrameda for Vera Cruz in Mexico. The reason of his travelling to Mexico before going to Florida was to get a pilot acquainted with the waters of the Mexican Gulf, and fetch one of the Fathers from New Spain who was to be his fellow missioner in Florida.

Ignatio de Urutia, a Cuban historian, thus describes their deaths: "They arrived with letters of recommendation from the governor of New Spain to that of Havana and were well received. Having been given all that was needed for their trip, they went to Florida. Father Diego de Peñalosa and the lay brother Fuentes disembarked in the bay of Espiritu Santo (Tampa Bay) and proceeded to the interior, where they received the crown of martyrdom at the hands of the natives. When the news reached the other Fathers, who had remained on board the ship, Father Luis

Cancer, fired with holy jealousy, landed in spite of the remonstrances of his companions, and in full view of those on board, received the same crown of martyrdom.*)

I have said before that the set of instructions (in Spanish they were called a *confesionario*) adopted by the convention or council of Mexico, were placed in the hands of the confessors in the diocese of Chiapa, and that the regulations concerning the absolution of slave owners were so iron-clad that copies of them had been sent to Charles V. together with a protest from the Spaniards. As the confesionario was unimpeachable on the ground of moral theology, the citizens of Ciudad Real advanced the plea, that it challenged the validity of the title of the kings of Spain to their American possessions. It was probably at the beginning of 1548 that the emperor asked Las Casas for an explanation of his ideas on the subject. As the confesionario had been proposed to the Mexican council by himself, and the instructions were the same as those formerly given to dean Gil Quintana and canon Perera, the

*) Luis Cancer de Barbastro seems to me entitled to the honor of the altars. Is he not a martyr in the strictest sense, having died for the exclusive purpose of preaching the gospel? Who will interest himself in his canonization?

bishop of Chiapa felt in duty bound to give his reasons for them, not only to the emperor, but especially to silence the prejudiced criticisms of the Spaniards in America.

A treaty was therefore written in defense of the confesionario, which Las Casas called *tratado comprobatorio*. The lengthy title given to the work explains its object.

"Herein are contained thirty propositions in jurisprudence, touching succinctly on many subjects pertaining to the right, that the Church and Christian monarchs have, or may have, on pagan people of all classes. In a special manner is herein pointed out the fundamental origin of the title, which the kings of Castile and Leon have to the supreme dominion of all the Indies, whereby they are the rightful universal lords and emperors of them all and of their many native rulers. Many other things well worth knowing are also pointed out concerning the conquest of the Western World. These thirty propositions have been formulated by the quondam bishop of Ciudad Real in the Indies, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas."

As Las Casas was in the habit of giving in the title of each of his works a description of its contents, so in what he calls the

argument he also gives the reasons or causes for writing it. The argument of his Tratado Comprobatorio reads as follows:

"Fifty years of experience had taught Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop of Chiapa, in New Spain, that the Spaniards in the Indies were living in a deplorable state of sin, that especially those of his diocese were greatly in need of light, to enable them to see the error of their ways and to know their sins, and that therefore it was incumbent upon him, as the shepherd of the flock, to devise means to enlighten them, and to draw them out of danger. As all this could scarcely be done except by sermons and through the confessional, he prepared a set of instructions in the form of a confesionario which was to serve as a guide to confessors in the administration of the sacrament of penance. This confesionario, having been brought over to this kingdom of Castile, was revised, and revised again, by six different and eminent doctors of theology, and was approved and countersigned by them. But some enemies of the truth, ignorant of what had been done in the Indies, and of the right by which it had been done, in order to palliate and excuse certain nefari-

ous crimes, made of one of the rules contained in the confesionario a pretext for calumniating him by pretending to see in it a doctrine which denies the validity of the title, which gave the kings of Castile the supreme dominion over the New World."

I will also give what he calls the prologue of the work, because these extracts are autobiographical, and describe the life of Las Casas at this period better than any thing that I might write.

"Your Highness requested me to appear before the council of the Indies on account of a confesionario, which I wrote for the guidance of confessors, who heard the confessions of the Spaniards in my diocese, containing, you say, certain propositions from which the deduction might be drawn, according to the opinion of some readers, that the title to the sovereignty over the Indies now exercised by the kings of Castile, is not valid. This is a very weighty matter and it requires a large treaty to deal with it properly, inasmuch as it would pass through the hands of eminent and learned persons. I have studied the subject for the past several years and I have begun just such a treaty. But as your Highness is in a hurry to send

it to his Majesty, I thought it advisable to compose this compendium of all that I have learned from the law of God on this subject, without stopping to give the proofs of my opinions. The proofs, and all the rest, will appear in another treaty, which, please God, your Highness will see me produce in the council of the Indies. As it will be necessary to touch on matters pertaining to faith, I hereby submit all that I have to say, to the correction of the Holy Roman Church."

We have therefore two treatises on the same subject written between the first of January 1548 and the thirty-first of December 1549. But these represent but a fraction of Las Casas' work during those two years.

"This treaty was written by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop of Ciudad Real de Chiapa, at the request of the council of the Indies on the subject of Indian slavery. It contains many arguments, and the authorities of many jurisconsults, which may prove useful to the reader in deciding many doubtful cases of restitution and other moral matters so much debated at the present time."

The argument or preface of this work tells us plainly, not only that he had not

given up the fight in behalf of the Indians, because Charles V. had been compelled by untoward circumstances to yield to the clamor and threats of the American slave-owners, but that, on the contrary, the bishop of Chiapa, on his arrival in Spain gave no rest to his Majesty's councillors, in his efforts to benefit the American natives.

"Argumento (preface) to the following treaty. The bishop of Ciudad Real de Chiapa, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, was pressing persistently the royal council of the Indies to consider the liberty of the Indians as the only general remedy for the Indies; and one of his petitions was, that the Indians held by the Spaniards as legal slaves, should all be given their freedom, arguing that out of their countless number not one had been enslaved justly, but that, on the contrary, all had been enslaved unjustly and iniquitously. The council having decided to set aside their other numberless occupations, and to take up this subject, charged and commissioned the said bishop to put in writing his opinions on the matter. In virtue of said royal commission and command the following proposition with its three corollaries, which like three branches of one tree, are the necessary consequences of its truth, has

been established and proved. Herein is demonstrated with what justice the Indians of that New World could have been and were enslaved, and that their masters are bound to restitution."

Neither this treaty, of which the foregoing title and preface clearly indicate the nature of its contents and the reasons for writing it, or the *Tratado Comprobatorio* give us the total product of Las Casas' literary activity during the years 1548 and 1549.

Between his arrival in Spain and the resignation of his bishopric, Las Casas wrote yet another treaty, the contents of which it would be superfluous to examine. All his works, the *Historia de Las Indias* not excepted, have for their ultimate object the defense of the Indians. It will be enough to give the title and the preface which will tell us the why and the how it happened to be written.

"The Right Reverend Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop of Chiapa, made answer to the twelve questions propounded in this treaty, concerning the spiritual welfare of the kings of Castile and Leon, and the Spaniards, who now reside or will reside in the Indies, and concerning the good government, preservation and eternal sal-

vation of the Indians; in order that our Lord and His Holy name be forever praised, and His Holy Catholic faith be spread more and more, extolled and practiced *in saecula saeculorum. Amen.*"

Preface. "A Friar of the order of Saint Dominic, virtuous, learned and zealous of the Christian religion went to the Indies to engage in the evangelization of the natives. There he preached the gospel for some years very successfully, during which he was an eye-witness to the oppression and slavery, of which the aborigines were the victims. Meanwhile he studied and learned the methods, by which those people had been subjugated by the Spaniards, not omitting to examine the causes, if any there had been, of the wars that had ended in conquest. Astounded at last to see his countrymen in all walks of life ignorant of, and indifferent to the danger, in which they lived of their salvation, especially the prelates and members of religious orders, who more than others are bound, the former by their pastoral office, and the latter by their religious profession, to watch, to inquire, to learn and to proclaim the truth; he reduced to writing the following doubts, which are not easy to solve. Then, impelled by a worthy desire of being

useful both to the Indians, who suffer the wrongs, and to the Spaniards, who inflict them, he travelled hither to submit the doubtful propositions to the learned men composing the different faculties, in order to elicit, if possible, a uniform decision in support of the truth. He first proposed his doubts to the aforementioned bishop of Chiapa, Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas of the order of St. Dominic, who was known to have studied these matters profoundly, and for many years. The said bishop gave an answer to each of the twelve doubts in the following treaty."

That same restless and inexhaustible energy, which, from the time he had seen the light of truth concerning the American aborigines while preparing in Cuba his memorable sermon for Pentecost Sunday of the year 1514, had sustained him in crossing and recrossing oceans and continents in behalf of his Indians for well nigh thirty-five years, now, at the age of seventy-five, enabled the first American priest to sit at his desk for whole days and nights writing innumerable letters, memorials, speeches and treaties in defense of his faraway children of America. His constitution must have been cast in steel. For neither his dozen trips across the Atlantic

or the thousand upon thousands of miles travelled on foot or on horseback, or the enervating, fever-laden climate of the tropics had clouded his mind or broken down his body. We have seen him brave the ruffianly anger of the conquistadores in Chiapa, then by his learning, his eloquence and his virtues align the wavering prelates of New Spain on the side of justice and truth. But the inspired words that the life of man upon earth is a warfare seem to apply to the first American priest more forcibly than to any other of his contemporaries. Scarcely had he set foot on his native country, when he was forced to begin another mighty battle. I refer to his controversy with the celebrated scholar, canonist, and theologian, Gines de Sepulveda.

In the mastership of Cicero's tongue Sepulveda had no superiors, perhaps not an equal in Spain, and in point of learning and dialectical powers, he ranked with such men as Melchor Cano, Victoria, Soto, and others of that brilliant galaxy of Spanish divines, who sat in the council of Trent. As early as 1533 Sepulveda had published in Rome a book entitled *Democrates*, or *De Convenientia Disciplinae Militaris cum Christiana Religione;* English: "On the

compatibility of the military profession with the christian religion." By the year 1547 he had become official chronicler to his majesty, a sort of sinecure office commanding a fat salary, and entitling the holder to the privileges of a courtier. In his leisure hours the popular and accomplished ecclesiastic continued his theologico-juridical studies, and, at the time of Las Casas' arrival from America, he was maneuvering to obtain permission to print a second work of his entitled *Democrates Alter, seu De Justis Belli Causis Apud Indos;* i. e. "Democrates II. or of the just causes for waging wars against the Indians."

The manuscript was evidently being examined by the council, when it fell in the hands of the Protector of the Indians, who decided to answer it in a work which he called *Apologia.* Its descriptive title will tell us again the nature of its contents, and the preface its origin.

"Herein is contained a dispute or controversy between Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop of Chiapa in New Spain of the Indies, and Doctor Gines de Sepulveda, chronicler to his majesty, the emperor. The doctor's thesis is that the conquests made in the Indies against the Indians are

lawful, while the bishop, on the contrary, holds it to be impossible that said conquests be not tyrannical, unjust and iniquitous. The question was debated in the presence of many learned men, jurisconsults and theologians, in a junta called together by order of his majesty in the city of Valladolid the year 1550."

The preface or argumento said: "Doctor Sepulveda the chronicler of the emperor, and an elegant Latinist, on the information and at the instigation of some of those Spaniards, who were most to blame for the cruelties and massacres perpetrated in the Indies, wrote a book in faultless Latin, advocating two propositions. The first of them was, that the wars heretofore waged by the Spaniards against the Indians had been waged for just causes, and that, the same causes recurring again, more wars should be fought against them. The second says, that the Indians must submit to the Spaniards, as the less wise must submit to the wiser; and that should the Indians refuse to do so, war could be made against them. These are the two causes of the destruction and death of numberless people, and of the depopulation of more than one thousand leagues of territory effected in new and different ways by the Spaniards in

the Indies during what they are pleased to call conquests, and by their Encomiendas, known by another name as Repartimientos. Doctor Sepulveda assigned as a reason for his treaty his desire and intention to defend the title by which the kings of Castile claim and exercise supreme and universal power over the Indies. But this was but a pretext; his intention being to propagate in these and in the kingdoms of the new world his damnable doctrines. The doctor presented his book to the council of the Indies, begging with great persistency that leave might be granted him to print it. It was denied several times, on account of the harm and scandal, which his work would cause beyond any doubt. Seeing that he could not prevail with the council of the Indies, he managed, through his friends at court, to obtain a decree from the emperor empowering the council of Castile to deal with the matter, who knew nothing of the affairs of the Indies. That decree reached Aranda de Duero, where the court was sitting during the year 1547 just at the time, when the bishop of Chiapa, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas arrived from the Indies. Having heard of the book and learned its contents, and knowing the great harm that its publication would cause, the

said bishop opposed it with all his might, exposing its poisonous doctrines, and the real reasons why it had been written. As the matters treated were mostly theological the members of the royal council of Castile, like the wise and righteous gentlemen that they were, decided to send the book to the universities of Salamanca and Alcala to have it examined and approved, if it was to be printed. After having scrutinized and carefully debated the subject-matters of the work, the universities decided that it should not be published, inasmuch as it contained unsound doctrines.

Not satisfied, but rather complaining of the decision of the universities, the doctor, notwithstanding his having been several times repulsed by the two councils, sent his treaty to Rome, to have it printed, not however in its original form, but in the shape of an apologetical address to the bishop of Segovia, who, friends as they were, after having read the work, had written him a letter containing a fraternal correction. The emperor, having heard of the publication, gave order that all copies of it be confiscated, as was done throughout Castile. And inasmuch as the doctor had made a compendium of it in the Spanish language, in order to make it more

accessible to the common people, and to all those, who did not know Latin, the bishop of Chiapa made up his mind to write also in the vernacular an *Apologia* in defense of the Indians, and against the compendium of the doctor, attacking and demolishing his arguments, answering his objections, and warning, at the same time, the people of the dangers, scandals and other evils that his doctrines would cause. Many things had happened after all that has been said, when the emperor last year, 1550, thought proper to call together in the council of the Indies quite a number of learned men, theologians and jurists, to discuss and decide, if the wars known as conquests, could lawfully and *salva justitia*, be waged against the Indians, when they are guilty of no other crime than that of being pagans.

Doctor Sepulveda, who was invited to give his opinions on the subjects, attended the first meeting of the junta, and spoke as long as he wished. Then the bishop was called; and he read for five consecutive days out of his Apologia, exhausting the work. *) As this was very long, the mem-

*) I give in this note the first paragraph of *Apologia* as a specimen of the latinity of the first American priest.

"Anno a partu virginis millesimo quingentesimo quadragesimo secundo, Carolus, Caesar Hispaniarum

bers of the junta, who were fourteen in all, requested the eminent professor of theology, Father Domingo de Soto, who was himself a committee man, to epitomize it, and to make a copy of the compendium for each of the other thirteen gentlemen, in order that they could study it at leisure, and then vote, at a future sitting, each one according to the lights that God would give him. Doctor Sepulveda asked to be furnished with a copy of De Soto's compendium, to answer it. He reduced the compendium to twelve heads, propositions or theses, to which he gave twelve answers. To the

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rex sempiterna hominum memoria dignus, edoctus Hispanos, caedibus, violentia, tyrannide longe lateque grassari per Indias, servitute premere maximisque incommodis afficere Indos Oceani maris accolas, qui Romani Pontificis decreto ad imperium supremum Castiliae et Legionis pertinent, solemnem quoddam concilium Piutiae sive Valisoleti indixit, advocato ex omni senatu lectissimo ac doctissimo. His injunxit ut cognoscerent an atrocia illa, quae ad se delata fuissent, vera essent, utque opportune remedium excogitarent, quo tantis malis obviam iretur, ita ut Indi pristinae libertati restituerentur, simulque novus ille orbis salutaribus legibus, ac prudentibus institutis compositus in posterum gubernaretur. De hac re per plures dies magnis est disputationibus agitatum, ac denique leges quaedam sancitae sunt, quibus Hispanorum bellicae expeditiones adversus Indos, quas *conquistas* vulgo appellaverant, prohibitae sunt; simulque cautum est, ut Indi omnes servituti pressi, ab eis, quibus facta divisione, id est *Repartimiento* sive *Comienda*

doctor's twelve answers, the bishop made twelve rejoinders. This is what gave occasion to, and caused the treaty herein contained to be written."

Las Casas was sustained by the commission, and Sepulveda never saw his *Democrates Alter* in print.

Why did Charles V. call that junta together?

Because the American Indian question had divided intellectual and political Spain into two hostile camps. It must not be supposed that the controversy had been carried on by Las Casas and Sepulveda alone.

(inventione quidam sathanica numquam antehac audita), adjudicati perperam fuerant, atque in regum Hispaniarum ditionem universalem reducerentur, regibus et dominis naturalibus in sua potestate et jurisdictione remanentibus. Haec res vehementer pupugit Hispaniorum, quibus Indi proeda opima erant et quorum facultates violentiis, rapinis et Indorum direptione crescebant, indignabundique et irato animo deplorabant a Caesare se facultatibus propriis spoliari, ac si, nonpredones sacrilega poena, sed legitimos rerum dominos justa rerum possessione deturbaret, ut nonnulli nullum non lapidem moventes quo suis rebus consulerint, impudenter a Caesare defecerint adversus Caesarem rebellarint. Alii ad viros doctrinae opinione claros confugerunt, ut solidis juris argumentis caesareas constitutiones opugnarent, ut tandem Caesar, legum iniquitate permotus, vel aboleret vel saltem suspenderet earum observationem, ut in aliquibus earum factum est, non quod non essent equissimae justissimaeque, sed quod cognita rebellione a proditoribus illis, majus aliquod malum ac atrocior seditio timeretur."

They were only the two generals leading the mighty hosts to the fray. Thus it is known that, in August 1548, the Dominicans having met in general chapter in Cordova, the most learned men of the Order had for several days sharpened their scholastic wits in conferences and disputations, the thesis being every day the same: "*Utrum barbaris novi orbis, quos Indos Hispana consuetudo vocat, liceat bellum inferre.*"

As these things were going on in Cordova, another group of distinguished theologians and jurists were sitting at the very same time at Valladolid discussing the self same question. The two leading lights of this group were Sepulveda himself and no less a theologian than the then renowned Franciscan Fray Bernardino de Arevalo.

The Spanish Conquistadores had for fifty years been busy waging wars against the Indians, and the western continent may well be said to have been turned into a vast field of carnage. If not the Spanish nation or its government, Spaniards were on trial, and the fourteen committeemen were the jury. The evidence was all in and they brought in the verdict: "*Guilty.*"

What parliament or committee of parliament of to-day would dare convict the

nation of a national crime? Perhaps those friars, theologians, jurists and antiquarians were not, after all, the useless article that many a modern writer would have us believe.

Charles V. and the government of Spain must have by this time realized that the venerable Protector of the Indians was more necessary at home than in America. His resignation of the bishopric of Chiapa was therefore considered, and accepted, granting him at the same time the privilege of naming his own successor. In fact the letter of the emperor, dated September 2nd, 1550, which instructed his ambassador at Rome to place in the hands of the Holy Father the resignation of Las Casas, presented at the same time and recommended Father Thomas Casilla, the superior of the Dominicans then working on the missions of the province of Vera Paz and the friend of Las Casas, to the vacant mitre.

Amidst his literary labors and controversies in behalf of the Indians, Las Casas did not forget that more friars were needed in Chiapa to instruct the natives in the faith and to form them to a Christian manner of life. Prince Philip had kept his promise of paying their travelling expenses to

America, and thirty, some Dominicans and other Franciscans, were ready to sail at the end of 1551. Las Casas accompanied them to Seville arriving there at the beginning of January 1552. A fleet of fifty-three or fifty-four ships were to sail together accompanied by several war vessels to protect them against the French corsairs or privateers, which, at that time, infested the Atlantic. Las Casas was compelled to wait for ten months with his friars (half of whom lost patience and returned to their convents) before he had the satisfaction of seeing them sail for the Indies. In a letter written to Prince Philip October 25th, 1552, he denounces in unmeasured and angry tones the jobbery and abuses in the Casa de Contratacion which had caused the unreasonable delay.

"It seems to me," he says, "that God has given me the special task of always having to weep for the sorrows of others, which however do not weigh lighter on me than if they were my own . . . . It is a travesty on justice and truth the way things go here, that it should have taken ten months to load and get ready this fleet, and that the black warships destined only to fight, especially the flagship, should have been overloaded to satisfy the greed of the

devil and of his brother . . . . It is a pity to behold the five or six thousand emigrants dying of hunger hereabout, waiting for the ships to sail . . . . To tell the truth I have spent (in looking after the friars) more than seven hundred ducats since I came here in January last. I am bankrupt, and don't know if I shall have money enough to take me back to court . . . . These large ships of Don Alvarado (he must have been the ship owner, the devil's brother) are the ruin of the Indies, and they should all be burned up so that not a splinter should be left of them."

A passage of this letter informs us that ecclesiastics had already begun to cross the Atlantic for unworthy motives.

"For the love of God, let your Highness take steps to inform his Majesty's ambassador in Rome to be on the watch, for truly this is a matter of great importance. It is better to have no friars at all in the Indies, than such friars; and it is a blunder to think otherwise. Devilish reports are now coming from the Indies about the Fathers of Mercy, which, in time, will reach your Highness.

"Melius est enim paucos habere bonos, quam multos ministros malos," says St. Clement.

"Don't let your Highness forget how much I have insisted before the council of the Indies that men in broadcloth and genteel loafers be not allowed to go to the Indies, especially to Peru. They go there to live on the labors of those unfortunate Indians. . . . I don't know when this blessed fleet will set sails. Glory be to God, and may He long preserve your Highness in His holy service. Amen.

Given at San Lucar de Barrameda, the 25th of October, 1552.

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop."

No doubt having to look after a lot of friars for ten months to see them safely on board their ship was very aggravating to the restless ex-bishop of Chiapa. But, after all, he must not have been in any great hurry to leave his native Seville, of which San Lucar was the port. For we find him editing there no less than eight of his works, the original editions of which all bear dates between July 1552 and January 1553. The press, however, of other business must have been great; for in order to finish that work, in as short a space of time as possible, he engaged two printing presses at the same time, that of the Spaniard Trujillo and the one belonging to the German Cronberger.

Seven out of the eight works have been noticed heretofore, i. e.:

1st. Brevisima relacion.

2d. His controversy with Doctor Sepulveda.

3d. The confesionario.

4th. The thirty propositions, etc.

5th. Tratado comprobatorio.

6th. The treaty on Indian slavery.

7th. The memorial presented to the Valladolid commission in 1542, who enacted the new laws.

The 8th, of which nothing has yet been said, was a pamphlet entitled: "*Principia quaedam ex quibus procedendum est in disputatione ad manifestandam et defendendam justitiam Indorum.*" Per Episcopum Bartolomeum a Casaus O. P.

Internal evidence shows it to have been written about the time of his controversy with Sepulveda.

These however do not represent, by any means, the sum total of the literary productions of the first American priest up to the year 1553. In fact, though it is not known why, the treaty *De Unico Vocationis Modo*, already reviewed, never was printed during Las Casas' life.

Perhaps his most interesting work to the sociologist is his treaty entitled: "*Questio*

de imperatoria potestate. An videlicet reges vel principes jure aliquo vel titulo, et salva conscientia, cives ac subditos suos a regia corona et alterius domini particularis ditioni subjicere possint."

I will translate the review of this work by Antonio Fabié.

"The pamphlet is divided into thirty-seven paragraphs, and is written in the scholastical style of that period, with numberless quotations of authorities adduced in support of the doctrines upheld, which are nothing more than deductions or corollaries flowing from the principles of St. Thomas Aquinas on so important a subject-matter. The titles of the different paragraphs will give a sufficient idea of the teachings of Las Casas.

1st Paragraph. The natural liberty of man.

2nd. The original right of man to take possessions of created things.

3rd. The rights which kings have to the property of individuals.

Las Casas denies that kings have any such right, and opposes the doctrine of eminent domain (not however the right of expropriation for the public weal, and with compensation) advocated by Hostiense, of whom he says: "If he means to uphold

the doctrine that a sovereign as such, has the right to dispose of the private property of his subjects, he has fallen into a serious error, which is opposed to the common opinion of the doctors." Modern individualistic schools go no farther in advocating the absolute right of individuals to property. In the same paragraph Las Casas combats another error of the bishop of Ostia, De Duce, on which those, who held that the monarchs of Castile were absolute lords of the Indies, having power to dispose of lands and all apurtenances thereof, based their opinion. Hostiense taught that the coming of the Messiah had the juridical effect of depriving of the individual's right to property all those, who did not recognize him as such, and refused to embrace his doctrines. That error, says Las Casas, is a most pernicious one, because it contradicts Holy Writ, the Holy Fathers, and the traditions of the Church. It opens the doors to a thousand thefts, to unjust wars, to numberless homicides and to all manner of crimes. It has been proved, says Las Casas, that Hostiense's proposition is heretical.

4th. In this paragraph, which is called constitutional compact about taxation, Las Casas sustains that rulers have not the right to tax their subjects without their consent.

5th. Under the heading of limitation of royal jurisdiction, Las Casas teaches, that the power of rulers cannot be arbitrary, and that it is limited to the execution of the laws.

6th. The duties of one city to the others within the same kingdom.

7th. Duties of one kingdom to other kingdoms.

8th. Laws injurious to the common weal are null and void.

This is a radical doctrine; and from it to that other one, which advocates the right of insurrection, there is but one easy step, which many contemporary writers had already taken.

9th. This paragraph which is a consequence of the 8th is entitled: Kings are amenable to the laws.

10th. Gives the proofs of paragraph 2d and an abundance of references and authorities to support them.

11th. Kings have no right to dispose of properties belonging to the people.

12th and 13th. Kings have no right to dispose of their sovereignty over the people.

14th, 15th and 16th prove that kings have no right to sell public offices.

17th. Kings have no right to dispose of the national domain.

18th. It is not lawful to grant exemption from taxation.

19th. Defends the now universally accepted doctrine that lucrative public offices must be given gratis, according to the abilities and merits of the applicants.

20th. Treats of the properties of the crown.

21st. Of the properties of individuals.

22nd and 23rd. Teach that kings cannot dispose of their kingdoms, in whole, or in part without the consent of the nation.

24th and 25th declare fiefs to be unlawful.

The remaining paragraphs are answers to objections raised against the foregoing doctrines."

I may add that Las Casas' principles imply that there can be no government without the consent of the governed.

If the French revolutionists thought of having discovered some new political principle, they were evidently mistaken; and if one reads over carefully the *Questio De Imperatoria Potestate* along with the constitution of the United States, he might be tempted to believe that the framers of the latter had taken the former for their model. The only substantial difference between the two documents consists in

this, that Las Casas' pamphlet calls the supreme magistrate of a nation a king or an emperor, who rules (with the consent of the people) during his life time, whereas the constitution speaks of a president to be elected every four years. Indeed the first American priest seems to be unwilling to confer on kings as much power as the supreme law of this republic grants to its chief executive.

How delighted would he not be to see, after the lapse of three and a half centuries, his principles prevailing (in theory) from one end to the other of this continent?

It would be interesting to know why Las Casas did not publish this work with the others printed in Seville in 1552. Perhaps it was because his advanced ideas would have gotten him in trouble and landed him where he could do no more good to his Indians. In fact, for preaching to some soldiers not to obey their officers when commanded to engage in a war against the Indians, that was plainly unjust, he had been criminally prosecuted in Nicaragua, during the years 1535 and 1536. Again, when his confesionario first appeared in Mexico, and then in Spain, it gave umbrage to Charles V., who called upon him for an explanation of his doctrines. It then re-

quired all the ingenuity of an expert dialectician as he was, to allay the emperor's fears and to satisfy him that his title to the Indies was not really attacked by the confesionario. What would have happened if the blunt and radical ideas of the *Questio De Imperatoria Potestate* should have been published at a time, when his antagonist Sepulveda had already accused him of printing another of his works surreptitiously? I am supported in this surmise by the fact that the Dominicans, who inherited his manuscripts and most of his ideas, five years after the bishop's death, gave the Questio De Imperatoria Potestate to the German ambassador, who had it published in Spire in 1571.

Las Casas' time, after his return from Seville in 1553, to the very hour of his death was spent in defence of the Indians, mostly by means of literary work. From his will we shall see how he kept up an active correspondence with all parts of the American Spanish possessions, which gave him a minute knowledge of what was going on in the West Indian islands, in New Spain, in Central and South America. This correspondence shows that the ex-bishop of Chiapa acted constantly as the attorney and general procurator of all the

Indians at the court of Spain. Did he hear of some new outrage of the Spaniards against the Indians? A memorial would be prepared at once, and presented to the emperor, to prince Philip or to the Indian council, denouncing it in his clear cut, plainspoken style, with which the reader has now grown familiar.

Owing principally to the importunities and constant forcible remonstrations of Las Casas, the conditions of the Indians in Mexico and elsewhere had been greatly improved. Vast numbers of them had been incorporated in the crown of Castile, which meant that they were like other free vassals, subject only to the king. As late as 1560 it had not yet been found practicable to carry out all the provisions of the new laws. But as nearly as it is now possible to gather, the condition of the Indians of an Encomienda at that period, was no worse than that of the serfs of feudal Europe. In most places, as in Guatemala and Mexico, the duties of the encomendados (the Indians of an Encomienda) were reduced to paying to the encomendero (the owner of an Encomienda) certain tributes, by a fiction of law, to the king, but in reality to the master.

While the operations of the royal or-

dinances coming into force in a progressive ratio with the establishment of law and order on a solid basis, yearly increased the number of free Indians, the landlords or encomenderos availed themselves of every conceivable pretext to increase the number of their encomendados. On the other hand a monastery with its friars, or a church with its clerigo (secular priest) had by this time been erected in almost every pueblo in Spanish America, and the friars and clergy in general had become the natural defenders of the people's liberties. The Indians, guided by the cross towering on every church steeple, had learned where to find protection from the exactions, greed and tyranny of the encomenderos. Hence interminable law suits, that soon choked the wheels of justice in the courts. On the whole the law officers, the clergy and public opinion must have inclined to the side of liberty, whenever a doubt existed as to the right of the encomendero to claim the services or tributes of the Indians. For the landlords found it to their interest to ask the central government in Spain to take a new census of all the natives, in order that it might be determined officially, who was, and who was not, a free vassal of the king.

By this means stronger shackles would have been welded on numberless aboriginal Americans, and Las Casas opposed the scheme with his usual energy and pertinacity. A memorial was presented to prince Philip, the opening paragraph of which reads as follows:

"Most powerful Lord. The exbishop of Chiapa kisses your Highness' hand and begs to inform you, that letters from New Spain tell me how all the Indians are made the victims of renewed oppression and tyranny; through the calumnies and machinations of the encomenderos, who do not desist from sucking their blood."

The memorial speaks of one method (which has not yet become antiquated in our own days) employed by the rich, influential and powerful encomenderos to oppress the Indians. Did these claim their liberty or a reduction of their tributes? Did they endeavor to resist some of the intolerable exactions of their greedy masters? Their complaints would be made the subject of interminable law suits, and of appeals intended to starve into submission the penniless complainants.

The kings of Spain had at all times resisted the petitions and the large sums offered by the Spaniards in America, to

have the Encomiendas established in perpetuity. These were to last only for two generations, and on the death of the Indians of an Encomienda and of their children, their descendants were to be given absolute freedom. By the middle of the XVI. century this mild form of slavery was beginning to be extinguished, and the slave-owners settled on a new plan to perpetuate it. Philip II. had gone to England to celebrate his wedding with Mary, his future queen. He was hard pressed for money, and a deputation of Spanish Americans had followed him with a bag of gold to help him out of his straits, if he would but consent to make over to them in perpetuity their Encomiendas. The offer was tempting and it seems that there was a time when Philip vaccillated between accepting it and rejecting it. Las Casas came to the rescue. He addressed a letter, not to the king, but to his confessor, Father Miranda,*) in which are summarized very

*) He was a Dominican, professor and doctor of theology, who resided for some years in England. Later he became archbishop of Toledo, and having been suspected of heresy, his trial by the courts of the inquisition proved the most famous in the XVI. century. Las Casas wrote of him, during the trial, that he was no heretic (*el qual no es hereje*). He was, however, convicted, and died while undergoing his sentence of detention, if he was not confined in a real jail.

forcibly and indeed eloquently the arguments adduced in his former works in favor of the Indians, and the litany is told once more of the wrongs done them by the Spaniards in America. It must not have been intended that Philip should see the letter, for the kings of Spain are here plainly made to assume their share of responsibility for the numberless crimes committed by the Spaniards beyond the Atlantic. Indeed it is noticeable that, while the first American priest in his earlier writings invariably charges the king's advisers with the responsibility of maladministration of American affairs, and exonerates the monarchs, in his old age, that is, after having become himself their councillor, and after having detailed to them numberless times by word of mouth and in writing the flagrant abuses, he makes no attempt to excuse or palliate their want of energy in shielding the helplessness of the American natives against the rapacity and cruelty of their oppressors. Nay, in more than one of his latest writings he lets his conviction transpire that Spain, as a nation, would yet be held responsible to God for its tyrannical rule in the New World.

I will make but two short excerpts from

the long letter, which appears to me as the most finished production of all of Las Casas' works, which have passed through my hands. He argues that in Spain, and not in England or Flanders, should the question of the Encomiendas be decided.

"It is now sixty-one years since those innocent people (the Indians) first became the victims of tyranny, theft and oppression, and forty since his Majesty began to reign in Castile. But his only reforms were the patchwork, which was applied no sooner than since I came to break the spell, with which a set of greedy, self-interested tyrants, surrounding him, kept him bound. Why should the kings of Castile hide themselves away in a corner of England or Flanders to hurriedly transact a business of so transcendental importance? If it be done it will be accounted by man a great mistake, and by God a great crime. I am as certain that no wise decision on this matter will be reached in England or in Flanders, as I am *that God, the infinite and infallible justice, will take away from the kings of Castile the Indies* if the opinion of councillors, ignorant alike of the interests of God and of the king, prevail. For it is written: "*Regnum a gente in gentem transferetur propter injustitias et injurias et contumelias et diversos dolos.*"

The letter forms a pamphlet of about forty octavo pages, and was written in answer to one from Father Caranza, in which the latter asked seven questions. I'll translate the answer of Las Casas to the seventh, as it will give some additional data on his biography and a closer insight of the relations then existing between the civil rulers and the ecclesiastics of the time.

Attached to the office of an every-day confessor are weighty responsibilities, even when a common laborer kneels before him to unburden his conscience. But the responsibility of the confessor of an absolute ruler and legislator, as the mighty Charles V. was, is, under one aspect, even greater than that of the penitent himself. Who would have thought that the renowned theologian Pedro de Soto should have made so frightful a blunder in directing his august penitent, as to cause the enslavement for life of not less than one million of human beings, because he neglected to investigate sufficiently the subject of the Encomiendas.

Las Casas' letter, after lying hidden away in musty Spanish archives for more than three hundred years, came forth to inform us of the historical fact. It shows

us also that several other letters passed between Las Casas and Caranza until a decision was reached in favor of the Indians.

"The answer to the seventh and last question of your reverence follows from what has already been said. It is iniquitous and diabolical, and contrary to all law and reason to grant Repartimientos of any kind either in perpetuity or for a limited period of time, even for one hour; because it deprives them of their liberty, and the Caciques of their dominions. . . . . It is like turning the Indians over to lunatics brandishing well sharpened knives. Hence the king or the pope has no more power than any private person to grant Repartimientos. Your Reverence must not deceive yourself, or allow the king to be deceived by the specious argument that, by not allowing the encomenderos to exercise either criminal or civil jurisdiction over the Indians, these will be sufficiently protected. This was the trap in which the emperor and his confessor, Father Pedro de Soto, fell, when they listened to the salaried procurators of the tyrants of Mexico, who, after having been thrice repulsed, represented to the confessor that really they asked for nothing substantial as long as they did not ask for either civil or criminal

jurisdiction over the Indians; as if they had ever exercised it, or as if they needed it to encompass their destruction. In this way they succeeded to annul the laws forbidding the Encomiendas of the Indians to their children. . . . . For charity's sake, don't let your Reverence be deceived into paying any attention to the provisions, laws and penalties, with which it is pretended to safeguard the protection of the Indians. They are inventions of the devil and of his ministers, to deceive and blindfold the simple ones of this world, and hide the deadly poison of the Repartimientos and of the infernal Encomiendas.

Should your reverence or the king wish me to prove the different propositions advanced in this letter, I'll do it to your satisfaction, by the divine, the natural, the civil and the canon law. As far as the facts are concerned, it will not be difficult to adduce thousands of proofs, out of the archives of the Indian council. Promising to answer your other questions in a separate letter, I put an end to this during the present month of August, 1555."

Of all the works of Las Casas (except the new laws which are, at least in part, the product of his brains and of his energy) none, in my opinion, had as important

results as this letter addressed to Father Caranza, the contents of which were intended for the conscience of Philip II., if not for his eyes. Had not its arguments and its pleadings prevailed, the western continent might have become again a vast slave market.

The first attempt to bribe the Spanish monarchs into selling the liberty of their subjects, had been made by the Encomenderos of Mexico. A few years later those of Peru, which then comprised the present republics of Ecuador, Peru, Chili, Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, Bolivia and the three Guianas, proffered large sums once more to Philip II. as a price for the perpetuity of the Encomiendas. It is pleasing to learn that before the death of Las Casas many Caciques and their Indians of South America were already free from the serfdom of the Encomienda, either because they had always been the free vassals of the king, or had become freemen by the operation of the new laws.

The provincial of the Dominicans in Peru, on hearing that a deputation of Spaniards had gone to Spain with another bag of gold to buy the perpetuity of their Encomiendas, managed to have himself and Las Casas (whom every chief con-

sidered his friend and father) appointed by the Caciques as their legal attorneys and procurators. The friar then travelled to Spain and in the company of Las Casas presented a memorial, not in the style of officious suppliants, but of business men, who were empowered to bid a higher sum for the liberty of their clients, than the masters had offered for their enslavement. It begins as follows:

"We, Don Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop, and Doctor Domingo de Santo Thomas, provincial of the Order of friars preachers in the provinces of Peru etc."

The Caciques in substance, through their procurators, promised to pay for their liberty $100,000 more, than the Spaniards had offered to keep them in bondage. And should a bid be made, the document says, by the Spaniards higher than the Indians were able to pay, then the Caciques guarantee the payment of $2,000,000 in four yearly installments of $500,000. To the honor of the Spanish crown, be it said, neither offer was accepted, and the hated Encomiendas were allowed to die, in the course of time, a natural death.

The memorial bears no date, but it must have been written not later than 1560. If therefore Las Casas did not suc-

ceed in setting free, during his life time, all of his beloved Indians, he lived long enough to see most of them enjoying as large a degree of prosperity and legal rights as the sums mentioned indicate.

The Protector of the Indians reached a decrepid old age in the full possession of his mental faculties; and his marvellous activity seems to have grown with his years. At the age of ninety, he was undoubtedly the best informed man, either in Europe or in America, about the conditions political, and religious of the new world. No ship sailed for Spain from American ports without carrying mail for the ex-bishop of Chiapa, and perhaps no document reached the colonian Indian office without passing through his hand, or at least without his knowing the substance of its contents. His love for his American children grew into a holy passion, and it is doubtful if during the last fifty years of his life he spent a day without thinking studying and working for their welfare.

It is therefore strange to be told by his earliest biographer, that Father Ladrada, Las Casas constant companion and confessor for upward of thirty years, should have found it advisable to urge the Protector of the Indians to still more earnest efforts

in their behalf. The exbishop of Chiapa had grown partially deaf and Ladrada, Remesal assures us, was overheard more than once telling his penitent aloud: "Don't you see, bishop, that you are on the road to hell, because you do not defend with sufficient zeal the cause of the poor Indians, whom God has entrusted to your care?"

The explanation of it all is to be found in the conviction of Las Casas himself, that he had been appointed, almost miraculously, or at least by a special dispensation of divine providence the Protector of the Indians. His confessor shared with him this conviction, and frequently warned his penitent that any action of his not consecrated to the fulfilment of his mission might appear sinful in the sight of God.

Something more remains to be said of the historical works of the first American priest. He fully deserves the title, which I gave him, of *Father of American history*. His father was one of the principal factors in the first settlement of white men on American soil in 1493, and had resided almost continuously in Hispaniola, when Las Casas landed there in 1502. Through the father, the son became acquainted with Christopher Columbus and his two brothers,

Bartholomew and Diego, and later enjoyed the intimacy of his two sons, Diego and Fernando. The latter's famous library was deposited, after his death, in St. Paul's Dominican convent of Seville, in which Las Casas spent, at different times, at least two years. There he had ample opportunities to consult and copy the writings of Columbus himself, and to become intimately acquainted with all the events connected with the discovery of the new world. That these are facts can be gathered from the writings of Las Casas himself.

As his histories go no further than the year 1521, he was therefore an eye witness of many of the most important events, about which he writes, and his other sources of information were invariably the originals of the writings or the words of those, who had been actors in the historical drama. Spanish America was fortunate in having him as its first historian as no other man ever was as well fitted for the task, as Las Casas. His honesty of purpose, his sincerity and trustworthiness as to facts, have never been challenged, although his zeal for the Indians perhaps betrayed him at times into exaggerating the number and the atrocities of Spanish outrages against the aborigines.

He wrote but one history which he called *Historia General de Las Indias*, to which reference has frequently been made as *Historia de Las Indias*. But having ended the LXVII. chapter of his work, he says: "Here was to have its place the history and description of the properties, natural advantages and geography of these islands, especially of this one (Hispaniola) and of the other countries discovered by the admiral (Columbus) and of the conditions, talents and natural habits of the natives. But as this subject requires itself a large treaty . . . . it is my intention to write it in a separate volume, which will not be a small one." That separate volume he called *Historia Apologetica de Las Indias*. The two together make about twenty-five hundred octavo pages of ordinary print.

The style is at times that of a familiar conversational narrative, rising to eloquence and force when inveighing against the oppressors of the Indians. It is not always clear, but frequently that of a man who endeavors to be redundant, while trying at the same time to press into one period as many ideas as possible. A desire to be correct and exact, as to dates and facts, is everywhere evident, and the salient idea left on the mind after wading through much

matter, which appears irrelevant to the modern reader, is that the writer cared for nothing more than to record correctly for posterity the events of his times and the impressions created by them on his own mind. Constantly recurring invectives against the Spaniards in America, and painting their almost every deed in the darkest of colors in order to gain the reader's sympathy and commiseration for the Indians, together with a superabundance of religious and moral reflections make the work tiresome reading at times. Many a chapter might be mistaken for an indictment against the wickedness of the Spaniards or a plea in defense of the Indians. History needs be shifted from the author's polemics, reflections, invectives and prayers; but when so shifted the reader gets possession of a genuine article. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that more correct information can be gathered about the first thirty years of American history from the works of Las Casas, than from the combined writing of all his contemporaries.

Historia General de Las Indias remained unedited until about twenty-five years ago, when it was published in Spain and republished in Mexico in 1877. On the title page of the orginal the following, in

the handwriting of Las Casas himself, can be read:

"I, Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, ex-bishop of Chiapa, bequeath this history in trust to this college of Saint Gregory, asking and begging those who now are or will be rectors or regents of the same, not to give it to any layman to read inside or outside of said college for the space of forty years beginning with January 1st of the incoming year 1560, and I hereby make it a matter of conscience for them to comply with this request. After the said forty years, should it appear to them expedient for the good of the Indians and of Spain to do so, they may have it printed for the glory of God and mainly in order that the truth may be known. It does not even appear advisable that all collegians be allowed to read it, but only the most discreet, in order that it be not published before the proper time. There is no good reason for publishing it now, as no good would come of it.

Given this November, 1559.

Deo gratias

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas."

There is abundant internal evidence to prove that Historia General de Las Indias was in the author's mind soon after his

novitiate in the Dominican convent of San Domingo, and that the gathering and co-ordinating of materials was begun in the convent of La Plata in 1527 and continued to the last years of his life. But inasmuch as we find largely quoted the biography of Columbus, by his son Fernando, which was published in 1537, and inasmuch as in the second chapter of the Historia General we find a quotation from the Portugese historian Joan de Barros, whose work appeared only in 1552, it becomes evident that the compilation and actual writing of the Historia General de Las Indias, as we have it, did not begin before the last mentioned date. It was mostly in the convent of St. Gregory in Valladolid that the work was done during what leisure hours his more pressing occupations in behalf of the Indians left him. The first book, which comprises about half of the work, was finished in 1559, when the donation of it in trust was made to St. Gregory's college. The third and last book was finished in 1561 as appears from its last sentences: "and wish to God that today, which is the year 1561 etc."

Las Casas relating the cruelties and crimes of the Spaniards in America, suppressed the names of the guilty parties in

all his other works, in order not to defame them in their own or during their children's lives; but in the Historia names are given, and not unfrequently biographical sketches of the men, who caused the deaths of thousands, and according to our author, of millions of American natives. Hence his determination that this, his most important work, should not be given to the public before the dawn of the following century.

We are informed in the introduction that the author's intention was to write the history of America up to the year 1550. "My work will be divided in six parts or books, which will give the history of almost sixty years, each book dealing with the events of ten years, except the first, which will count only eight, because the Indies were discovered in 1492 etc." I have already stated that not improbably Las Casas wrote more of his Historia General de Las Indias, than the three first books that end with the year 1520.

In 1562 Las Casas received a joint letter from the Dominicans working on the missions in the dioceses of Guatemala and Chiapa. The good Fathers expressed much satisfaction in telling the founder of their missions how, not only the spiritual, but the material conditions as well of their Indians

had improved. According to their views not much more was left to be desired, although the Encomiendas had not yet all been abolished. This was gratifying evidence that his former labors in those parts had not been in vain, but that on the contrary they had borne abundant fruits. *) But the uncompromising Protector of the Indians was satisfied, to the hour of his death, with nothing less than the absolute freedom of all the Indians, and the restitution by the Spaniards of their illgotten wealth.

Las Casas answered the friars' letter chiding them with the holiness of their Encomenderos, and urging them, in a tone of reproach, not to rest until complete justice was done to their flocks.

I refer to this long letter because it gives several data of vital importance to his biography. Thus the following will tell us how great had been the literary activity of the first American priest. "I have written many sheets of paper, more than two thousands of them, many of which have

*) The density of pure Indian population is to this day greatest in the territories that formed the dioceses of Chiapa and Guatemala when Las Casas wrote. Nowhere on this continent can as many pureblooded Indians be found within an equal amount of territory.

been read, word for word, from the chairs of the universities of Salamanca and Alcala, and in our own college. The professor of theology, Father Domingo de Soto (may his soul rest in peace), approved all of my writings, which he read or heard read, and said that he could have written no better himself about Indian matters, although he would have adopted a different style. He sat side by side with professor Miranda and professor Cano in the junta called together in 1551 by the emperor, before which I read my *Apologia* against Sepulveda." According to the foregoing and my own calculations, Las Casas' writings, if collected together would have formed between ten and fifteen thousands octavo pages of ordinary print. The reader knows already that he ranked with the foremost theologians and canonists of his time.

Las Casas' ordinary place of residence, after his resignation of the See of Chiapa, was the college of St. Gregory of Valladolid But the last six years of his life seem to have been spent in court, where his services were almost constantly required in the government of the Indies.

The decree of Philip II., ordering that he be given lodgings wherever the court might sit, is not the only proof of the fact

(overlooked by his early biographers) that Las Casas seldom, if ever, found himself in that city after the year 1560. When the court settled in Madrid we find him there too, although he preferred a cell in a Dominican convent to the court's apartments. It was the convent of Our Lady of Atocha, where the first American priest made his will in February 1564. The following portions of it deserve to be translated. "Inasmuch as the goodness and the mercy of God, whose unworthy minister I am, called me to be the Protector of the inhabitants of the countries, which we call the Indies, who were once the lords of those lands and kingdoms; inasmuch as he called me to protect them against the unheard of persecutions and oppressions, of which they were made the victims by the Spaniards; inasmuch as he called me to protect them from the violent deaths which desolated, frequently under my eyes, and continue yet to desolate thousands of leagues of territory; therefore I have labored in the court of the kings of Castile, going and coming from the Indies to Castile, and from Castile to the Indies many times for about fifty years, i. e. from the year 1514, for the love of God alone and through compassion seeing those great multitudes of rational men

perish, who originally were approachable, humble, meek and simple, and well fitted to receive the Catholic faith and to practice all manner of Christian virtues. As God is my witness that I never had earthly interest in view, I declare it to be my conviction and my faith (and I believe it to be in accordance with the faith of the Holy Roman Church, which is our rule and our guide), that, by all the thefts, all the deaths, and all the confiscations of estates and other uncalculable riches, by the dethroning of rulers with unspeakable cruelty; the perfect and the immaculate law of Jesus Christ, and the natural law itself have been broken, the name of Our Lord and of his holy religion have been outraged, the spreading of the faith has been retarded, and irreparable harm done to those innocent people. Hence I believe that, unless it atones with much penance for those abominable and unspeakably wicked deeds, Spain will be visited by the wrath of God, because the whole nation has shared, more or less, in the bloody wealth that has been acquired by the slaughter and extermination of those people. But I fear that it will repent too late, or never. For God punishes with blindness the sins sometimes of the lowly, but especially and more frequently of those

who think themselves wise, and who presume to rule the world. We ourselves are eye-witnesses of this darkening of the understanding. It is now seventy years since we began to scandalize, to rob, and to murder those peoples, but, to this day, we have not yet come to realize that so many scandals, so much injustice, so many thefts, so many massacres, so much slavery, and the depopulation of so many provinces, which have disgraced our holy religion, are sins or injustices at all.

I have also given to the college of St. Gregory all my Latin and Spanish manuscripts, in my own handwriting, concerning the Indians, that of the *Historia General de Las Indias* included. It has been my intention that the latter should never come out of the college, except for the purpose of having it printed at such a time as will please God, while the original must at all time remain in the college. I beg again the Fathers, who are or will be rectors or regents, to comply with this request of mine and to make it a matter of conscience to preserve it and take care of it.

And whereas I have received a very large number of letters from many friars of three different religious orders, and from many other persons from almost every part

of the Indies, giving information about all the evils, grievances and injustices inflicted by our countrymen on the natives of those kingdoms, (although they had in no manner offended us) and begging me earnestly to ask the king and his council to find a remedy; and whereas these letters are witnesses to the truth which I have, by the grace of God, defended for many years, and witnesses, at the same time, of the injustices, oppressions, calamities and deaths, which those people have suffered at our hands, thus affording a history ready-made and authenticated by, in every way, credible testimony; therefore I beg the rector, for charity's sake, to select one of the least busy of the Fathers of the college, and to assign to him the task of collecting all said letters into a volume, arranging them in chronological order as to the time of their reception, and compiling an index showing the provinces whence they came. The volume should be placed in the college library *at perpetuam rei memoriam*, in order that, *should God decide to destroy Spain, it may be readily seen, that the punishment is caused by our own destructions in the Indies*, and thus the reason of his justice shall be made apparent.

I penned these lines at the end of February 1564.

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, bishop."

Was the first American priest a prophet? And if so, were the naval battles of Manila and Santiago de Cuba the last scenes of his unfolding prophesy?

If any of my countrymen thinks so, let him reflect that the all-wise and all-mighty God frequently punishes the sins of one nation by those of another; and that while at the end of this XIX. century scarcely an Indian is to be found over the length and breath of these United States, at the beginning of the XVIII. the aborigines were everywhere almost as thick as on any other part of this continent.

It is possible that the lines quoted above were the last written by Las Casas. No other, known at present, in his handwriting, bears a later date.

The works of the first American priest clearly demonstrate that he was first a man of prayer; second that he possessed in an eminent degree an abiding faith in God, and his Providence; and third that he was constant in the practice of the virtue of mortification. To the very last days of his life he kept rigorously the severe primitive rule of St. Dominic.

Good Father Ladrada remained his companion to the last. "Together they prayed,"

says one of Las Casas' biographers, "together they walked, together they ate, and together they helped each other to defend their doctrines and the Indians."

At last at the ripe old age of ninety-two, Bartolomé de Las Casas was about to surrender into the hands of his Creator his soul in a cell of the convent of Our Lady of Atocha. His fellow Dominicans knelt around his humble couch and recited the prayers for the dying. Then the first American priest and Protector of the Indians, holding in his hand a lighted candle, addressed his brethren and begged them to persevere in their defense of the Indians, and asked them to join him in prayer to God, that he might be forgiven for any remissness on his part in the fulfilment of his mission. As he was about to state how he had come to embrace that mission, his beautiful soul left its earthly tabernacle to seek a home in heaven.

Bartolomé de Las Casas died the last day of July 1566.

Were we to begin with his sermon preached on Pentecost Sunday in 1514, and read all the ten thousand pages, which he says, he wrote during the fifty years intervening between that date and 1564, when he wrote his will, not one would be found

not written directly or indirectly in defense and in behalf of the Indians. Every sermon, every speech, every familiar conversation, I imagine, spoke of the Indians, as his last words were spoken for his Indians. Truly if his mission was not an inspiration from God, the Protector of the Indians was a monomaniac for more than fifty years. But may the all-merciful God grant this New World many more monomaniacs like the first American priest.

Have I proved that in the pages of American history

Non est inventus similis illi?

My task is done. I have told in English, as well as I knew how, the story of the first American priest, that the ten thousand English speaking American priests might have a mirror in which to reflect their own lives, and a prototype to copy. If they are to fulfil their mission of christianizing the northern part of this Western Continent, they must be energetic, learned and persevering in the fixed purpose of drawing souls to God, i. e. walk in the footsteps of Bartolomé de Las Casas.

The following beautiful tribute to his memory is by a non-Catholic author.

"In contemplating such a life as that of Las Casas, all words of eulogy seem weak

and frivolous. The historian can only bow in reverent awe before a figure which is, in some respects, the most beautiful and sublime in the annals of Christianity, since the apostolic age. When now and then in the course of the centuries God's providence brings such a life into this world, the memory of it must be cherished by mankind as one of its most precious and sacred possessions. For the thoughts, the words, the deeds of such a man, there is no death. The sphere of their influence goes on widening for ever. They bud, they blossom, they bear fruit, from age to age." *)

*) John Fiske in his "Discovery of America."

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